

Chronicles

AUGUST 2009

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

\$4.95

Commodity Culture



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"ENDURING QUÉBEC"



John Thomas Fleming, Gail Fleming, and Christopher Check, along with special guest Amb. James Bisset, John Remington Graham, and Luc Gagnon, as we explore history.

SINGLE: \$1,795.
COUPLE: \$2,595.

The story of Québec is an amazing tale of cultural survival. It begins with brave men—French, English, and American—fought for Québec, including the gallant Montcalm who died defending the city on the Plains of Abraham and the general Wolfe who died in the attack. Although conquered by England and virtually alone on an English-speaking coast, the Québécois held fast to an identity, culture, and language that were threatened with extinction. Today, there is more French spoken in Québec than there was 50 years ago, but have the Québécois triumphed only to surrender to the myth of multiculturalism and the Marxist internationalism that threatens all small nations?

Commanding a bluff overlooking the Saint Lawrence, Le Château Frontenac is among the world's most magnificent hotels. This historic property is in the heart of Old Québec and is a destination unto itself.

The price for the Convivium includes:

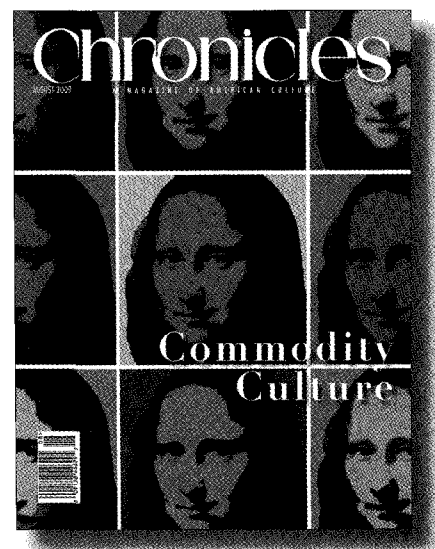
- Five nights' lodging at Le Château Frontenac (arrive Sept. 3, depart Sept. 8)
- A welcoming reception
- Three group dinners
- One group lunch
- Guided walks to historic sites
- Lectures and discussion on the culture, history, and politics of North America in its most beautiful city.

For more information, or to register, contact Christopher Check at (815) 964-5811

Registration is limited. Previous Convivia have sold out. Registration fees are based on current exchange rates; the Institute reserves the right to assess a fee, should rates change significantly at the dollar's expense.

Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE



PERSPECTIVE

Johnny Rocco's World
by Thomas Fleming

10

VIEWS

"Vampire-Loving Barmaid Hits Jackpot"
by James O. Tate
The commodification of culture.

14

Unpalatable Values
by Andrei Navrozov
Culture as gastronomy.

Watching the Money
by George McCartney
Brought to you by Nokia™.

NEWS

The \$15 Trillion End Run
by William J. Quirk
An "oligarchy of interests."

REVIEWS

Decline and Fall
by Tom Piatak

Theodore Dalrymple: *Not With a Bang But a Whimper:
The Politics and Culture of Decline*

Clark Stooksbury on Steve Sailer's *America's Half-Blood Prince: Barack Obama's "Story of Race and Inheritance"* ◆
Wayne Allensworth on P.D. James' *The Private Patient* ◆
Lloyd E. Gross on James Kalb's *The Tyranny of Liberalism: Understanding and Overcoming Administered Freedom, Inquisitorial Tolerance, and Equality by Command*

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From England: A Tsunami of Towers
by Derek Turner

VITAL SIGNS

COMMONWEAL: American Mojo
by Douglas Wilson

DISCRIMINATION: Who's Insane?
by Evan McLaren

COLUMNS

17 **GROWING UP IN AMERICA** 26
"Measuring Decline by Prices"
by Paul Craig Roberts

20 **UNDER THE BLACK FLAG** 28
"Laugh Riot"
by Taki Theodoracopulos

BREAKING GLASS 36
"Looking Backward"
23 by Philip Jenkins

THE ROCKFORD FILES 37
"The End of Manufacturing"
by Scott P. Richert

29 **IN THE DARK** 47
"What a Drag"
"Drag Me to Hell"
by George McCartney

32 **WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD** 48
"The Trouble With Russia"
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

DEPARTMENTS

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES 4
AMERICAN PROSCENIUM 6
CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS 7
CONTRASTS 42

POETRY
38 *John 21.18 and* 12
Anabasis 16
by Ralph McInerney

ON THE COVER

46 Cover and inside illustrations
by Melanie Anderson.

EDITOR
Thomas Fleming

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Scott P. Richert

SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
Chilton Williamson, Jr.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Aaron D. Wolf

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Nicole M. Kooistra

DESIGNER
Melanie Anderson

INTERIOR ARTIST
George McCartney, Jr.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
*Katherine Dalton, Tom Landess,
Tom Piatak, Joseph Sobran,
James O. Tate, Taki Theodoracopulos,
Clyde Wilson*

CORRESPONDING EDITORS
*Wayne Allensworth, Donald Livingston,
Roger D. McGrath, William Mills,
William Murchison, Claude Polin*

EUROPEAN EDITOR
Andrei Navrozov

FILM EDITOR
George McCartney

LEGAL-AFFAIRS EDITOR
Stephen B. Presser

POETRY EDITOR
Catharine Savage Brosman

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Cindy Link

PUBLISHER
The Rockford Institute

A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices:
928 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Website: www.chroniclesmagazine.org
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5813.
Subscription Department: P.O. Box 0567,
Selmer, TN 38375. Call 1-800-877-5459.

Copyright © 2009 by The Rockford Institute.
All rights reserved.

Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture
(ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for
\$44.99 (foreign subscriptions add \$15 for
surface delivery, \$48 for Air Mail) per year
by The Rockford Institute, 928 North Main
Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Preferred
periodical postage paid at Rockford, IL and
additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to *Chronicles*, P.O. Box
0567, Selmer, TN 38375.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the
authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect
the views of The Rockford Institute or of its
directors. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot
be returned unless accompanied by a self-
addressed stamped envelope.

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Vol. 33, No. 8 August 2009
Printed in the United States of America

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Viable Alternatives

I usually find Roger D. McGrath's *Sins of Omission* to be the most interesting column in *Chronicles*, and "Hiroshima and Nagasaki" (July) was no exception. However, I wonder why defenders of our use of the A-bomb seem always to present us with a false dilemma: Either we use the bomb or suffer hundreds of thousands of casualties in conquering the Japanese homeland. Why invade Japan at all? Her empire was gone, and she was no longer a threat to us. She could not supply her remaining armies, and they would have withered. Why not keep Japan blockaded and isolated indefinitely, or until such time as the Japanese sued for peace, while using their factories, airports, harbors, etc., as training targets for our bombers? I'm not saying that this would have been better than dropping the A-bombs, only that there was another viable alternative to invasion.

—Charles Hayes
Tyler, TX

Throughout the 25 or so years that I have devoured every article in *Chronicles*, I have never been more saddened than I was in reading Roger McGrath's "Hiroshima and Nagasaki." *Terrorism* is the term that we use to describe the bombing of 15 civilians in a shopping center or the tragic events of September 11, but it is classified as a justifiable military operation if carried out at 25,000 feet by B-29's and the casualties are in the hundreds of thousands.

Dr. McGrath, whose previous articles I have greatly admired, bases his justification of our bombing of the two cities on the number of casualties that America would have incurred as a result of an invasion of Japan. It is, no doubt, presumptuous on my part to debate history with an historian, but why would we have had to invade in the first place? Japan, whether or not the entirety of her leadership was ready to recognize the fact, was defeat-

ed. She was an island nation with no viable navy, no viable air force. Where were the supplies and raw materials going to come from to sustain a continuing offensive war effort? While it is certainly true that women and children would have fought to the death were their homeland invaded, Japan's days of empire building were over.

If it is true as many have written—but I will yield to Dr. McGrath's expertise in this matter—that many in Japan's leadership were willing to surrender with terms but not unconditionally, would it have been worth a million casualties not to offer terms but to insist on unconditional surrender?

There are those, I am certain, who could make a viable case that an invasion was not necessary—an idea, as Dr. McGrath has stated, with which Admiral Nimitz would have concurred. But my main objection is the oldest, simplest, and shortest teaching in moral theology (and, therefore, of the principles of just war): The end does not justify the means. The debate, in my opinion, should center, not on the end (the prevention of a massive invasion) but on the morality of the means—namely, the terror bombing of civilian population centers. Hitler was condemned by much of the world for his bombing campaign targeting British cities, and "Bomber" Harris came in for his share of criticism from his own people when England retaliated in kind against German cities.

It is not just the bleeding hearts of the left who find it impossible to justify the firebombing of Tokyo, Dresden, Cologne, etc., not to mention Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As a father who has given three sons to the United States Marine Corps, I take a back seat to no one in willingness to defend America and to stand up for freedom. Being willing to die for one's country is not the only burden we must bear; however, willingness to kill imposes extremely serious obligations and considerations. The war had better be just, and the means employed to bring about victory must likewise be

just. There will always be what is euphemistically termed “collateral damage,” but the intentional slaughtering of civilians to bring about victory in war is indefensible by any standards that are used to judge the conduct of belligerent nations.

—Bob Schroder
Hattiesburg, MS

Dr. McGrath Replies:

Charles Hayes and Bob Schroder are in good company: Nearly the entire editorial staff of *Chronicles* agrees partly or entirely with them. In one way I do also. In “Firebombing the Fatherland” (*Sins of Omission*, June 2005) I describe the American refusal to join our British allies in bombing German cities at night. The commander of the 8th Air Force, Gen. Carl Spaatz, thought what the British were doing—indiscriminate saturation bombing to terrorize the civilian population—could be considered a war crime. Spaatz insisted that American pilots would bomb only during daylight to ensure that military targets were pinpointed and civilian casualties minimized. Nonetheless, our bombing also resulted in monstrous collateral damage. British bombing by night and American bombing by day killed no fewer than 600,000—some argue as many as a million—German civilians, numbers that far exceed those Japanese killed by not only the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki but also the firebombing of Tokyo.

After the failure of the German offensive at Bastogne in December 1944, the Fatherland was clearly defeated. Yet the firebombing of Dresden occurred during mid-February 1945. Other than Dresden’s rail yards, which American precision bombing could and easily did destroy, there were no legitimate military targets in the city that was known as the Florence on the Elbe. The loss of civilians in Dresden probably exceeded 100,000. Estimates vary from a claim by a few British apologists of 35,000 to a high of a half-million. Assessment of total losses is problematic because

Dresden was packed with nonresidents, as streams of German civilians, fleeing the Russian advance from the east, poured into the city. Kurt Vonnegut, an American POW in Dresden, said that tens of thousands of these people were simply incinerated in the holocaust, leaving behind no record of their existence. Vonnegut also says that 135,000 corpses were found in basements and underground shelters. He should know. He and other American POWs were among those tasked with hauling the bodies to huge funeral pyres for cremation to prevent the spread of disease.

Despite the horrific example of Dresden, there is not an industry in academe arguing that the U.S. strategic-bombing campaign should have been suspended by the end of 1944 and that we should have waited for an exhausted Germany to surrender. If this were the case, I would find defense of our strategic bombing during World War II more difficult. Those who question the morality of it all, proportionality, and what constitutes a just war certainly present a stronger case when such principles are applied uniformly and consistently. I know that the editors at *Chronicles* apply these principles to the European theater of the war as well as to the Pacific theater. It is clear that Mr. Schroder does also and I suspect that is true for Mr. Hayes as well, unlike agenda-driven leftists who are morally outraged only by the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

That said, have I presented a false dilemma—either bomb or invade? Could we have blockaded Japan and simply waited for the Japanese to surrender? There are many problems with such a course of action, and space allows me to address only a few.

By the summer of 1945 the Japanese still held some 100,000 Allied prisoners—more than 40,000 had already been executed, tortured to death, or died of starvation or disease. Hundreds of the prisoners were dying daily, and the death rate was accelerating. Most prisoners weighed little over 100 pounds. Richard O’Kane, our top submarine commander, was 88 lbs. when he was liberated from a prison camp

in August 1945. O’Kane and most of those like him were only a month or two away from death when Japan surrendered. Another year of imprisonment, torture, and slave labor would have meant death for even the healthiest of the prisoners.

A naval blockade of Japan would also have meant the death of thousands of sailors. Surface ships would have been the target of the *kamikaze*. During the battle for Okinawa, *kamikazes* sunk 36 U.S. ships and damaged 368. Five-thousand American sailors died in the suicide attacks, and another 5,000 were wounded. Despite having to fly hundreds of miles from the home islands, principally from Kyushu, and having to penetrate U.S. combat air patrols and massive anti-aircraft fire from U.S. naval vessels, 15 percent of the *kamikazes* got through to hit a ship.

How many Japanese would have had to die from starvation or disease before Japan capitulated? Certainly tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands or even millions. Throughout the Pacific the Japanese preferred death to surrender. For people who slit their own bellies and detonated grenades while holding them against their bodies, deprivation and hunger meant little. Says Tsurumi Shunsuke in *An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan*, “[Suicide] was seen by the Japanese on the main islands as a proper model for their own behavior should the U.S.A. prove victorious and land in Japan. The Government declared that loyal subjects of the Emperor must prepare themselves for glorious self-destruction for the sake of preserving the national structure. The tenet was that even when all the Japanese, including the Emperor himself, had perished this structure would remain. . . . Very few people in Japan doubted this line of reasoning, and virtually no one, not even social scientists or members of the various religious sects, ventured to criticize it.”

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as horrific as it was, caused the Japanese government to capitulate and saved tens of thousands of American lives and hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Japanese.

Needed: A North Korean "Plan B"

For years, the United States and East Asian nations have proceeded on the assumption that a diplomatic solution to the North Korean nuclear crisis is feasible. A settlement would entail Pyongyang's renunciation of its nuclear ambitions in exchange for diplomatic and economic concessions by the other participants in the six-party talks.

But what if the underlying assumption is wrong? What if Kim Jong-Il's regime is merely stalling, while building nuclear warheads and a reliable missile-delivery system? North Korea's recent missile tests and nuclear test, as well as Pyongyang's withdrawal from the six-party talks, suggest that such a scenario is likely. What is our "Plan B" if the six-party talks fail?

Some think Plan B should involve imposing stronger multilateral economic sanctions and intercepting North Korean ships that might be carrying nuclear or missile materials, using the Proliferation Security Initiative as justification. The Obama administration seems to favor that approach.

Both elements of the strategy have problems, however. Pyongyang has warned that it would view searches of its ships as an act of war. It would be risky to call that bluff. And while Beijing reluctantly supported a new U.N. Security Council sanctions resolution in June, Chinese leaders remain wary, arguing that harsh economic sanctions will make Pyongyang less cooperative.

China also fears that too much pressure could cause the North Korean state to implode. Beijing still wishes to preserve North Korea as a buffer between China and the U.S. sphere of influence in Northeast Asia, and an implosion would lead to the sudden emergence on China's border of a unified Korea allied to the United States. It might also lead to a massive flow of North Korean refugees into

China. That is why Beijing remains reluctant to use its economic leverage as North Korea's principal source of energy and food to compel Kim's regime to halt its nuclear-weapons program. Without Chinese cooperation, coercive economic measures will have little impact on Pyongyang.

U.S. leaders insist that North Korea abandon her quest for nuclear weapons and gradually become a normal member of the international community, or face ever-greater isolation. But that strategy could prove quite dangerous. If isolation fails to convince North Korea to abandon her nuclear ambitions, we could end up with an extremely bad combination. Isolating a country that possessed nuclear weapons would exacerbate tensions and increase the possibility of a fatal miscalculation. Equally troubling, if Washington and its allies imposed further economic sanctions on an already impoverished North Korea, the incentives would increase for Pyongyang to seek revenues from other sources—especially by selling its missile and nuclear technologies to any paying customer—state or nonstate.

Others think Plan B should be to accept North Korea as a nuclear-weapons state.

There is a credible argument for this approach. The United States has deterred other bad nuclear actors in the past, most notably the Soviet Union and Maoist China, and our vast strategic arsenal would likely deter Kim Jong-Il. But this approach, although more practical and prudent than military force or robust sanctions, is not without its own problems.

We may well be able to deter a nuclear attack on the United States, but deterring a nuclear Pyongyang from bullying its neighbors is more doubtful. North Korean leaders might well wonder if the United States would really risk war (including attacks on American targets in East Asia) merely

to protect third parties.

Moreover, relying on deterrence still leaves room for dangerous North Korean mischief in other respects—particularly with regard to her worrisome proliferation activities. Pyongyang's apparent nuclear assistance to Syria raises a disturbing question: What other countries—or nonstate actors—might also be among Kim's clients?

Another Plan B would focus on inducing China to undermine Kim Jong-Il's regime and promote the emergence of a more pragmatic government in Pyongyang, along with the explicit condition of keeping the country non-nuclear. Such a bargain would include a commitment from Beijing to promote the reunification of the two Koreas within the next generation. The price in terms of concessions from the United States would not be cheap. At a minimum, Beijing would probably want a commitment from Washington to end its military presence on the Korean Peninsula and, in all likelihood, to phase out its security alliance with South Korea. That would require the United States (and Japan) to accept a significant expansion of Chinese influence in Korea.

But to some extent, that is already happening. Trade between South Korea and China is expanding rapidly, and Seoul's policies on relations with Japan and the status of Taiwan align more with Beijing than with the United States. Even a united Korea is likely to be close to China diplomatically and economically. Striking a bargain with China regarding North Korea would get us something worthwhile in return for relinquishing an already waning strategic and political asset.

In any case, U.S. and East Asian officials need to be thinking about a Plan B now. It is not prudent simply to hope that the six-party talks will produce an effective solution. Given North Korea's record, that is merely the triumph of hope over experience. <

CHANGE WE CAN LAUGH AT

With the election of Barack Obama, opponents of U.S. intervention abroad were supposed to throw their hats in the air and cheer: The millennium had arrived! The war in Iraq would end rather shortly, and the Bad Old Days of the Bush-Cheney-neocon Axis of Evil were coming to an end.

So why are we embarking on what promises to be a decades-long occupation of Afghanistan, and what, exactly, are we doing bombing civilians in Pakistan's tribal areas?

The official rationale is that Al Qaeda has established base camps in the region and is "plotting attacks against the United States" from its "safe havens." Yet what sort of "haven" is required to plot an attack? Do the terrorists really require the thousands of squares miles of Pakistan's tribal region to plot and scheme? The September 11 attacks were planned in apartments in Hamburg and on the Atlantic coast of Florida, where the hijackers lived for a time. By this sort of presidential "logic," we should be taking on the Germans and bombing the Sunshine State.

Obama's justification for the war is that the Afghans, under the Taliban, hosted Osama bin Laden and his allies—eight years ago. Yet Bin Laden is long gone, and he may not even be alive. Moreover, the Taliban are out of power, and they aren't a unitary group anyway. Are we really going to occupy that country for the next decade or so, pouring billions into a war that defies both history and logic, in order to prevent the Taliban from reconstituting itself—and on the off chance that Bin Laden lingers still?

All of the arguments against the invasion and occupation of Iraq apply equally to Afghanistan—and to Pakistan. Our presence creates yet more enemies and provides a training ground for jihadists who come from all over the Muslim world to fight the infidels. Our actions are desta-

bilizing the government of Pakistan, which has a precarious hold on power in any event, and alienating the people of Afghanistan, who simply want to be left alone.

If you thought the Bush years were bad, as far as U.S. meddling around the world was concerned, the Obama years promise to be even worse. Our first African-American president shows every sign of getting us involved—militarily—in Africa, where the potential for do-gooding at gunpoint is virtually limitless. Somalia is getting a huge shipload of weapons, and our allies in Uganda—not exactly a bastion of liberty—are praising this decision, along with the Ethiopians, long a U.S. favorite, while the Eritreans, the Sudanese, and other neighboring countries are murmuring nervously, and rising Islamic movements threaten retaliation.

On the Russian front—yes, there is a Russian front, sad to say—the news also is not good. The Obamaites are determined to pursue the Bushian strategy of provocation and moralizing. This includes the decision to base "antimissile" weapons systems in Poland and the Czech Republic, which are supposed to defend against the highly unlikely possibility of an Iranian attack on Warsaw and Prague, although the systems are pointed straight at Moscow. Also on the Russian front, albeit in the Central Asian theater, we just bought ourselves a military base in Kyrgyzstan—or, rather, we re-bought it at the higher price demanded by the local gangster "government." We supposedly need it to transport supplies to our occupying army in Afghanistan—although as a buffer against Russian influence, it certainly serves a dual purpose. (The Russians, by the way, have their own base in Kyrgyzstan, not too far from ours. Those Kyrgyz are playing both sides of the street.)

Meanwhile, the Obamaites are feigning distress over Honduras and denouncing the coup that is being led

by a graduate of our "School of the Americas," which trained so many of the South American death squads of yesteryear.

Change? Don't make me laugh.

—Justin Raimondo

IRAN AND HER SIMILES

In the aftermath of the ousting of Saddam Hussein and the "liberation" of Iraq by U.S. forces, Bush-administration officials who had earlier compared Saddam to Hitler extended that analogy and suggested that postwar Iraq was like post-World War II Germany and Japan and Italy, where the U.S. military occupation helped replace totalitarian regimes with thriving democratic systems. Hence, after freeing Iraq from the yoke of Ba'athism, there was no reason why the Americans would not be successful in producing a rerun of the Western-oriented political and economic reconstruction of Germany, Japan, and Italy in Iraq—and then in Iran, Syria, Palestine, and parts beyond.

As the neoconservative ideologues were drawing the parallels between "Islamofascism" and Nazism, envisaging the rise of a liberal democracy on the banks of the Euphrates, and debating whether Ahmed Chalabi should be marketed as the Adenauer or the De Gaulle of the New Iraq, a friend forwarded me a brief survey he had just completed: "One-Hundred Reasons Why Iraq Is Not Germany and Japan." In it he explained why the neoconservative historical analogy was so silly, mostly because it was, well, ahistorical and failed to take into account the many differences among, say, Iraq, Germany, and Japan—or for that matter, between Germany and Japan, or Iraq and Iran—with regard to geographic location, demographic makeup, and cultural and religious traditions.

Serious social scientists who try to apply such all-encompassing models

as “modernization” to explain political and economic change around the world recognize that they need to take into consideration the unique historical context of the region or country that they are studying. But when it comes to pop sociologists and American journalists parachuting to this or that international “hot spot,” not to mention the global crusaders managing U.S. foreign policy, everything seems to fall into very neat Manichean categories.

Indeed, according to this interpretation, the Good Guys are usually referred to as “Westernized,” “modernized,” “reformist,” “secular,” and “democratic,” which also means that they are “pro-American”—not unlike the demonstrators in the streets of Tehran protesting the designation of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as winner of Iran’s recent presidential elections. They are usually under attack by Evil, represented by those who can be identified by the antonyms of the aforementioned adjectives, like the “anti-American” and “anti-Western” ayatollahs ruling Iran.

Manicheanism was one of the major Gnostic religions of Iran, originating in Sassanid Persia. But the philosophical dualism that seems to dominate the current debate on the U.S. response to the political upheaval in Iran is very secular and American in nature. Its grand narrative of

an America standing up to ideological monsters abroad by supporting people “like us” evolved during the 20th century under the influence of Wilsonian fantasies and against the backdrop of World War II and the Cold War.

In fact, when it came to the actual foreign-policy decisions that were made by U.S. presidents and their advisors, Machiavelli, not Mani, was the main influence on American policymakers. It was the cunning *Realpolitik* of Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau—and not Wilson’s idealism—that determined the political outcome of the Great War. In World War II, the United States and Great Britain had no choice but to ally with Stalin, a ruthless dictator, in order to achieve a military victory against the Axis Powers, while during the Cold War, President Richard Nixon launched the opening to China in the midst of the bloody Cultural Revolution as part of a strategy to checkmate the Soviet Union.

Whenever U.S. policymakers and pundits were guided strictly by their Manichean vision, their decisions only spelled disaster for U.S. national interests. Treating North Vietnam as an integral part of the Soviet Bloc and failing to identify the powerful nationalist component in Ho Chi Minh’s strategy made the extraction of U.S. forces from Southeast Asia more difficult. Much of the intellectual basis for the

“War on Terror” and the ensuing Iraq war reflected the fallacy of an existing monolithic Islamofascist bloc—disregarding the secular, if not anti-Islamic-fundamentalist orientation of the Iraqi and Syrian Ba’ath regimes or dismissing the historical conflict between the Sunnis and the Shiites in the Middle East. Moreover, the U.S.-led campaign to promote democracy in the former Soviet Bloc after the collapse of communism, and our encouragement of the “color” or “velvet” revolutions in such places as Ukraine, Georgia, or Lebanon, were based on the assumption that the drive by individuals and groups in these nations and societies to oust their ruling elites was motivated primarily by universal ideals of democracy and liberalism and by the appeal of joining the West. But the American narrative seemed to disregard a critical element in these developments. These revolutions were impelled by powerful nationalist, ethnic, and religious forces, like the anti-Russian sentiments found in Poland, Hungary, and Georgia or among the Ukrainian majority in Ukraine; not surprisingly, members of the Russian minority in Ukraine opposed the Orange Revolution. Similarly, the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon pitted Maronite Christians and Sunni Muslims against Shiites backed by Iran, while the political changes in Iraq in the aftermath of Saddam’s ouster empowered the Arab Shiites and the Kurds while weakening the former Sunni-controlled elites. To make the story line even more complex, what many Americans see as a linear process of democratization and liberalization could be seen as the playing out of intra-elite rivalries—which is part of what happened in Russia and Rumania after the fall of the Communist Party.

The political crisis in Iran seems to combine all of these elements and more. There is no doubt that some of the demonstrators in the streets are members of a more urban and Westernized elite. But these Iranians are not necessarily “pro-American”—any more than the Chinese protesters in Tiananmen Square were. In fact,

THE ESSENTIAL SAM FRANCIS COLLECTION

Shots Fired

SAM FRANCIS ON AMERICA'S CULTURE WAR

320 pages • \$23.95

SHOTS FIRED

SAM FRANCIS ON AMERICA'S CULTURE WAR

Put Sam Francis
in the
front
of your
library

To order, call (800) 383-0680 or visit www.ChroniclesMagazine.org

many of the former Chinese student activists have become part of a rising Chinese nationalist movement that recognizes the deep tensions between U.S. and Chinese interests. Hence, one shouldn't be surprised if the secular democrats protesting against the ayatollahs today transform into fervent Iranian nationalists—and press for nuclear weapons—if and when they come to power.

The fact that the protests in Tehran have the potential to challenge the ruling religious elite has less to do with the enthusiasm of the young and cool demonstrators and more with the power exerted by two of the former leaders of the Iranian revolution and members of the ruling elite: former prime minister and presidential contender Mir-Hossein Mousavi and former president Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. In the past, both were involved in directing anti-American terrorist activities and in managing Iran's nuclear manufacturing, and it is doubtful that they will reorient Iranian domestic and foreign pol-

icies if they succeed in their campaign to deny the presidency to Ahmadinejad. In fact, they could prove to be more assertive and more effective in managing Tehran's relationship with Washington.

Iran is not like China in 1989 or Russia in 1991, but like . . . Iran in 2009. She may or may not be undergoing major political changes. Even under the best-case scenario—a gradual erosion in the power of the ayatollahs—Iran, with her strong sense of national identity, religious vitality, talented people, huge oil resources, and links to Shiite communities in the Middle East, will remain a self-confident and forceful regional power whose interests are more likely to collide than to coincide with those of the United States, the only global power with a massive military and a diplomatic presence in the Middle East. Taking into consideration the long history of conflict between the United States and Iran, any attempt on the part of Washington to intervene in Iran's changing politics would on-

ly make it more difficult for the United States to engage Tehran on a range of policy issues that affect U.S. strategic (nuclear weapons) and economic (oil) interests. History teaches us that Iranians are not necessarily like us—and that they do not necessarily like or hate us. The most effective way to create the conditions necessary for improving U.S. relations with Iran is to recognize that historical reality.

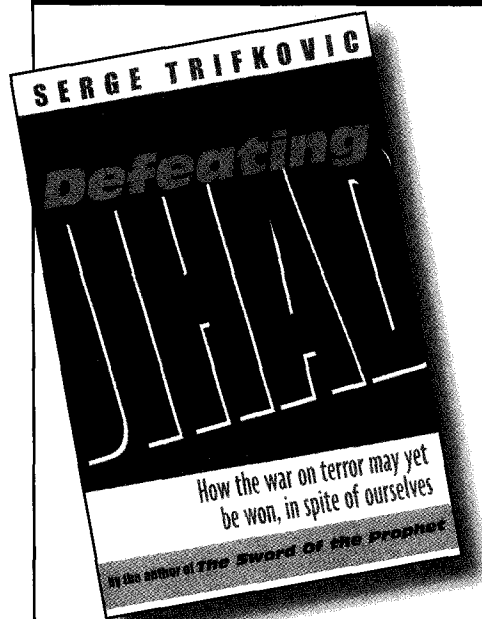
—Leon Hadar

OBITER DICTA

Our poet this month is **Ralph McInerny**. Professor McInerny's most recent books of verse are *Shakespearean Variations* and *The Soul of Wit*, both published by St. Augustine's Press. He has taught at Notre Dame since 1955.

Our cover and interior art are provided by **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson, our designer, received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

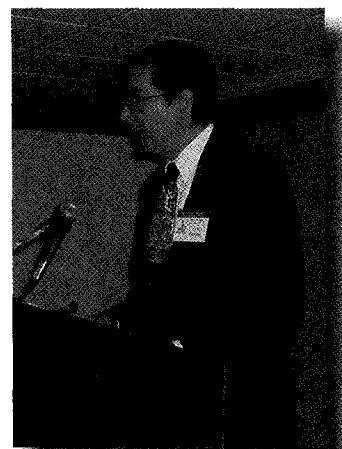
From the author of *The Sword of the Prophet*



"The victory will come not by conquering Mecca for America but by disengaging America from Mecca and by excluding Mecca from America. Eliminating the risk is impossible. Managing it wisely, resolutely, and permanently is something attainable."

Defeating Jihad

by Srdja Trifkovic



How the War on Terror May Yet Be Won, In Spite of Ourselves

Softcover Price: \$27.95 (\$22.95 plus \$5.00 s/h each)

Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

- send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103
- call (800) 383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover
- purchase online at the webstore on ChroniclesMagazine.org

DEFE

Johnny Rocco's World

Conservative political strategists are like the military strategists they would like to emulate: They are always fighting the last war. For how many years, when the Soviet Union was collapsing, did conservatives continue to rail against the communist menace? Marxism, and not only the virulent Leninist strain adopted by the Bolsheviks, had once posed a serious threat to the security and order of the United States and Europe. It was a life-threatening disease that all decent people were bound to combat. By the 1970's, however, the threat of communism was no longer on the order of congestive heart failure or even a slow-wasting cancer; it was more like a recurrent malaria the body had got used to. It weakened the constitution of the patient, certainly, and its periodic bouts under Kennedy and Obama have been undoubtedly unpleasant, but it is not Marxism that is going to kill us.

For at least 50 years, the wars conservative ideologues have been fighting were lost even before open hostilities broke out. The feminist revolution was already won when women were given the vote and Republican businessmen at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce were championing "equal pay for equal work." The subversion of the family represented by the pernicious movement to secure "children's rights" was well under way when Americans accepted government schooling, school-attendance laws, and child-protection statutes—at the beginning of the 20th century. As for Marxism in America, one could apply to our Cold War politicians the statement (which put Lawrence Dennis on trial for sedition) that FDR waged war against fascism abroad in order to impose it at home. When the New Dealers succeeded in winning acceptance for the withholding tax, it meant they had already persuaded a majority of Americans that the government was in charge not just of the entire national economy but of every employee's income. Every socialist measure since has merely been a question of more or less, of working out the consequences.

Whatever the issue of the moment—same-sex "marriage," global warming, the Obama administration's takeover of the automobile industry—conservatives are at least a decade late and a couple of trillion dollars short. But even if they knew in advance what the left's next big assault on our liberties was going to be, it would make no difference, because they still would do nothing. It is a question of mental outlook.

Let me explain with a self-serving anecdote. Some years ago, when it became clear that I had correctly anticipated several crises—over immigration, the Balkans, and the

upsurge of an "America First mentality"—a colleague asked me to look into my crystal ball and tell him what the next big crisis would be. I tried (and failed) to explain that it is not prescience that is needed but comprehension. His question assumed that our difficulties arise from a conscious plot being hatched by some little group out there. We Americans, conservatives have assumed since Mr. Welch went from being a candy butcher to a conspiracy butcher, are basically good. It's the Harvard faculty; it's the Jews or the Catholics; it's the feminists, homosexuals, union bosses, capitalists, Sierra Clubbers or fluoridationists. If we could anticipate whence the next threat would come, we could be plotting our resistance in advance.

But there is no plot, only consensus among the powers that be and their allies. Listen to the Democrats today. Free to speak openly, they treat with contempt any common assumption of 50 years ago, *e.g.*, that a contract is a contract, that the workman is worthy of his hire (and no more), that marriage is a binding relationship between a man and a woman, that what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours. Rejection of everything normal is the common sense of the modern political class.

The leftist aversion to common sense is nothing new; it is as old at least as the 18th century. Conservatives cannot fight the left, much less win, because—whether they know it or not—they share the same outlook, the same set of basic principles. They support the leftist revolution, but they think it has gone far enough. How many times have you heard a conservative say, "I did not leave the Democratic Party; the Democratic Party left me"? How many conservative Republicans were offended by the adulation that Ronald Reagan and Newt Gingrich displayed toward the President-for-Life, Franklin Roosevelt? How many conservatives do not preface their objection to, say, "gay marriage" or affirmative action with the disclaimer, "Now, I believe in equality, but . . ."?

For longer than I can remember, the conservative strategy has always been the same: First, concede the principles of the left, then quibble over their implementation. A few years from now, we shall be hearing conservatives whining, "I have never objected to marriage between two guys, but three is one too many."

About this time in the conversation, I am supposed to



say something like, “I am only talking, of course, about Washington insiders, not the rank-and-file conservatives who preserve traditional American virtues, *etc.*, *etc.*” At best, however, one might say of the best American conservatives what Metternich once said of the German people: Their heart is good, but their head is unsound.

A simple illustration of this lack of connection between heart and head can be found in the support of decent conservatives for the Iraq war. Muslims had, after all, launched an attack on the United States, and it was time for our country to show that she could defend herself. Those were sound patriotic instincts, but it did not at all follow that we were justified in attacking a country that had nothing to do with the events of September 11, 2001. It is not just that conservatives believed Dick Cheney’s lies. (How much are the Democrats paying the former vice president to keep his party in disrepute? Is there any other rational explanation for his bizarre behavior?) After all, popular ignorance and credulity must be taken for granted in the American electorate. What was seriously disheartening, however, was the widespread acceptance of the immoral arguments for preemptive war and executive privilege put forward by the administration and accepted by most conservatives.

Many Catholic Republicans, who are supposed to know better, were outraged by Joe Sobran’s moral condemnation of the war in the pages of *The Wanderer*, but no serious Christian of any kind can possibly accept such propositions as, if you are attacked by person A, you are free to retaliate by killing unrelated person B, or if you claim to fear an attack by B, you are justified in taking him out by anticipation. If I applied this principle to my troublesome neighbors, I would be doing life for murder one.

The conservatives’ support for the war might be explained away as an expression of national panic, but the ethical confusion they have displayed on every issue they care about—abortion, same-sex “marriage,” trade policy, immigration—makes it apparent that there is no “conservative mind” that shapes the conservative agenda. In fact, the American conservative movement accepts the basic principles of a revolution that first assumed a violent form in the French Revolution.

What principles? Many of them are tidily summed up in a propaganda pamphlet written, for the most part, by one of our greatest men. The Declaration of Independence, with its affirmation of self-evident truths, natural equality, and the social contract is a tidy summation of the liberal-revolutionary principles that undermined the social order of Europe and North America, stripped us of our Christian defenses, and exposed us to wave after wave of destructive innovation. The Jacobins, the Forty-Eighters, the Bolsheviks, the feminists, the environmentalists—where would they be if John Locke, Adam Smith, and their mentors and disciples had not first laid the ax to the roots of Christendom?

I am not blaming Jefferson or even the Straussian and Marxist leftists who have twisted his fatuous propaganda into a “founding document.” The Declaration would be

harmless if American conservatives did not accept all the other lies of the Enlightenment or the thousands of lies that it has been misused to justify. Let me just name a few at random: the equality of the sexes; the government’s obligation to ensure equal opportunity; the right to attend the church of one’s choice; the power of government to regulate or define marriage, to provide for the health and welfare of the citizens, and to confiscate property in a good cause; the principle of one man, one vote; the notion that America is uniquely a “nation of immigrants” that cannot in good conscience defend her borders; and, finally, the sick and destructive lie that all nations, ethnicities, cultures, and religions are of equal worth and ultimately compatible with one another, making it possible for lying politicians to claim that “Islam is a religion of peace.”

After the left wins the “gay marriage” battle, who knows what will be the next bout of shadowboxing the conservative movement will undertake? Massive confiscation of property? The subjugation of religious groups to the newly discovered principles of the 14th Amendment? (What, you won’t pay for abortions or permit lesbian bishops?) It does not matter, because the contest will only determine the speed with which the revolution proceeds.

This long and tedious preface brings me to the question at hand in this issue. For over a hundred years the left has condemned wealth and economic inequality. For the most part the conservative response has been to encourage some form of consumerist hedonism. If we are to believe Rush Limbaugh—who is far from being the most obtuse conservative leader, quite the contrary—greed is not only good, it is the American way of life. After September 11, George W. Bush wanted us to spend our way into euphoria, and Barack Obama now says he wants us to spend our way out of depression, by buying not necessities but worthless junk, most of it made in China, that rots our minds and pollutes our existence. Check out the blogs of younger conservatives, if you have a strong handkerchief to protect your nose, and you will find chatter about name brands and celebrities that might have been posted on their MySpace pages.

The conservative response to the disappearance of civilized life is the second answer Johnny Rocco (Edward G. Robinson) gives when the old man asks him what he wants out of life. First, he says he doesn’t know; then, prompted by Humphrey Bogart, he utters the conservative credo: “Yeah, that’s it. More. That’s right! I want more!” When Bogart presses further and asks if he will ever get enough, Rocco reflects: “Well I never have. No, I guess I won’t.”

Perhaps the director and cowriter (John Huston) was only venting his leftist spleen against any free-enterprise economic system that depends on growth. But in a social organism, just as in a biological organism, there is healthy growth, as when a creature or society, reaching its natural size, can thrive and propagate, but there is also the cancerous growth, which is growth for growth’s sake: the brain tumor that first robs us of our intellectual faculties, then kills

us; the unrestricted immigration and cancerous industrial and commercial growth that makes the land unfit for the people whose ancestors fought and died for it.

To all the liberal slogans spouted by conservatives and libertarians, there is always a question that must be asked. To Milton Friedman's "free to choose," a sane person would have to ask, "Choose what?" Otherwise, we shall become like the librarians and teachers who tell children to read without specifying whether they should be reading *Emma* or *Harry Potter* or *The Philosophy of the Bedroom*. So, to

the champions of unlimited growth, we should be asking not only *what* should grow and *how big* but also *for what good purpose*. Until conservatives ask—and answer—such questions, they will be stuck playing the same old games with the leftists who pick the playing field and dictate the rules. Conservatives have always lost in the past—especially when, as in the 1980's, they thought they were winning—and, unless they wean themselves from the revolutionary ideology they have taken in with their mothers' milk, they will always lose in the future. 

John 21.18

by Ralph McNerny

Four seasons of a family pass my house,
An old man wheeled by a younger, the son
Of his daughter who follows with two tots.
The ancient has been shaken up, clothed by others,
Does not choose the way he goes.
His cap is pulled down firmly on his head,
Its bill pulling him forward into what
Throughout his life had been his final end
If not his goal. I watch the wintry figure
Pushed by summer as autumn and spring
Attend his going. No need to ask reasons
For his passing, save that of the seasons.

**BIG
SAVINGS!**

MASSIVE INVENTORY LIQUIDATION

Are you missing back issues of *Chronicles*?



There's never been a better time to fill in the gaps of your *Chronicles* collection. We're cutting warehouse costs by putting all of our back issues on sale. Normally, one back issue sells for \$7 (including shipping and handling).

Right now, you can buy an entire year's worth of back issues for only \$25 (plus \$5 s/h)!

Save even more by purchasing any five years' worth of back issues for only \$100 (plus \$20 s/h)! That's only \$2 per issue!

Choose from the following years:
1989, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

To order, call Cindy Link toll-free at (800) 383-0680. But hurry—**quantities are limited**. Once an issue has been sold out, it won't be reprinted!

THE ULTIMATE DEAL: Get one copy of each issue that we have in stock, from 1977 to the present, for only \$750 (s/h INCLUDED)! That's over \$1,000 off of our regular price!

“Vampire-Loving Barmaid Hits Jackpot”

The Commodification of Culture

by James O. Tate

Well, of course you’re reading my compelling exposition because of its lapel-grabbing title, but did you notice that my title is in quotes? Oh, yes indeedly. That’s because I got the title from Motoko Rich’s article in the *New York Times* of May 20, and I didn’t want to plagiarize, or rather I should say that I didn’t want to get caught plagiarizing.

So, according to the previously cited Motoko Rich (*op. cit.*), we have learned that Charlaïne Harris of Magnolia, Arkansas, has recently made a bundle with her series of “Sookie Stackhouse vampire mystery romance novels” (*New York Times*, May 20, 2009, *op. cit.*) and the HBO tie-ins related thereunto. Ms. Harris has indeed reached the No. 1 spot on the *Times*’ best-seller list for hardcover fiction, and, if one photograph tells me anything, I dare say that Ms. Harris can identify with her readers, and they with her. And by the way, you just read an elliptical chiasmus. This is *Chronicles*, buster.

Now as a veteran *Times* reader, and indeed a veteran reader, period, I was a little challenged as to why the *Times* best-seller list wasn’t enough in itself. That Americans read trash is hardly news, and if it is, that news belongs in the business pages. So why the additional attention, then? There was the condescending treatment of small-town America, of course, but I knew there had to be something else besides a quote like “Every trip to Wal-Mart is an inspiration” (*op. cit.*). Then there was something decisive, though it was hedged: “With their message of accepting diversity, Ms. Harris said she wrote the Sookie novels in part as ‘a metaphor for gays in America.’ But, she added: ‘I am not a crusader. If you need a good adventure or a vacation from your problems, then I am your woman’” (*ibid.*). The politics was perhaps not as obvious as it seemed, for if there is one thing to want to escape from, that would be the tom-tom beat of the inverted homosexual strategy of certified victimization.

I am not in the market for any vampire mystery romance novels, for like many another, I read Bram Stoker’s 1897 version many moons ago, and do not see any competition on the horizon for the perverse erotics and bizarre vision of the outrageous original. I remember that, when I was young, an adult assured me that *Dracula* was the greatest of novels. OK, so maybe it wasn’t that—but it remains a

hell of a book, a real roller coaster. You might suppose that there could have been some sense of context in the *Times* account, but as George W.S. Trow has insisted, we live in the context of no context.

Yet if I hadn’t known much about vampire mystery romance novels, then neither had I known that there were other “genres” that signified, if anything, less. I don’t know or I didn’t know, or I didn’t care, or I just didn’t give a flying rodent rump—I’m trying to get in touch with my feelings here—what “a classic historical lesbian romance novel” *was* or *is* or *might be* until I “read” about it on the web and began to realize that I would have to expand my grammatical take on the possibility, or rather the impossibility. I was thinking future perfect, like this: By this time next week I still will not have read a classic historical lesbian romance novel, as far as I know. But wait a minute, maybe I was just having difficulty with my right-brain processing and connecting it with male-dominated white history, because my regard for the epigrams and lyrics of Théophile Gautier is one of rapt admiration and the image of Mademoiselle de Maupin might fit in there somewhere, if only I could adjust my imagination to fit the requirements of illiteracy and ignorance that are imposed by the New World Order, er, Oprah—whatever.

Because let’s face it, when Aristotle was lecturing and the usual groupies were scribbling the *Poetics*, neither novels nor romances existed to be analyzed, so the generic criticism we needed and need was not intoned and transcribed. But the Greek romances were just around the corner, though Longinus, who was more in touch with his feelings, paid them no heed. Epic and dramatic poetry were greater than prose, by definition—they were even sublime. Not much earlier, Horace lived just before the composition of great prose fiction, but he gave it no mind, though, later on, T.S. Eliot and F. Scott Fitzgerald did. Future perfectly, I will by the end of this screed have indicated little or nothing about the Alexandrian Library and Callimachus and Apollonius of Rhodes, though I would dearly have loved to because, in those days, they really had criticism—but never mind, let it go. We will get to what “literary critic” means today in just a moment, and, at that time and not before, I will be willing to answer all the questions that dance in your respective (as opposed to respectful and respectable) noggins.

But as I am no longer disposed to the future perfect but rather toward conditions contrary to fact, I believe that

Contributing editor James O. Tate is a professor of English literature at Dowling College on Long Island.

means the subjunctive is in order, so here we go. Had I reviewed with you the sums that ancient elites devoted to the purchase, classification, analysis, storage, preservation, and retrieval of papyri and parchments, what an education that would have been indeed! And were we to have contemplated the paradoxical losses imposed by the gain of alphabetic literacy, the benefits would have been immense!

That feels ever so much better, so now we can resume the indicative. There was a bubble for library acquisitions a long time ago, and after the collapse of the ancient world, there wasn't much of a market for anything, though in the monasteries respect was given to various manuscripts. So we can say that the commodification of culture is an old story, and that strangely enough, the medium of culture itself has become a commodity—that is to say, the book. And a book is a commodity in two opposite ways. It can be the object of a bidding war because it is unique, as in the only copy, or a rare autographed first edition. Or it can be a commodity because there are a million copies sold, which means that it has little market value, but that it has generated a lot of cash or plastic digits. It is the latter case that we mean when we talk about the commodification of culture, unless we are Matthew Arnold or Theodor Adorno.

But as I have tried to imply however gingerly, culture has always been a commodity, in the sense that you could hardly expect Homer or Demodocus to recite epic poetry for you (much less improvise the sublime through divine inspiration) unless the feast had been funded and the wine was flowing freely (excuse the excessive touch of alliteration there). To change the image, we can imagine Pope Julius II nagging about the ceiling with his house painter, Michelangelo, thus giving us the first *So Popera*. Flash forward to the embarrassing novel and the wretched movie, and there or here we are, from *So Popera* to Soap Opera. The story is a great one, however vulgarized, for it is the ultimate image of the artist's need for a commission—he must render culture, not create it. This elementary point has been occluded by centuries of romantic and modern arrogance, and postmodern nihilism. A professor once told me that, in the familiar story, the Pope was a tyrant, destroying the artist's free vision by stipulating his subject! He couldn't have been more wrong and was really making a statement about his own delusions, as academics tend to do. Artists always work best within definition, limits, and prescription, and often enough, the artist sensibly provides these himself. Otherwise, the culture, the patron, or the marketplace performs the necessary function. To confirm the point, Michelangelo carried a chamber pot with him as he ascended the scaffolding, because he worked by natural light for long summer days in a supine position—he didn't want to be interrupted by any need to descend. He was an artist when to be that also meant to be a man, a craftsman, and a worker. Those days are pretty much gone.

Another story is that of Dr. Samuel Johnson and Lord

Chesterfield, a story that has been distorted. Johnson rejected quite rightly the interference and impertinence of Chesterfield, in a neoclassical sense. The episode has no romantic footing at all, for Johnson rejoiced to concur with the common reader and never rejected common sense. The swelling of the romantic ego is in another key altogether, one related to politics in uncomfortable and even bizarre ways.



Melanie Anderson

Before Marcel Duchamp trivialized art, Richard Wagner in effect tried, by finessing the wacko he had cultivated, to be his own patron and to create *Kultur*, not art. Yes, he was a craftsman and a worker at times when he was not shopping for silk underwear, but he was also a gnostic visionary and ranter who assumed that one kind of inspiration was a licence for another, or even for playing God. His number-one idolator after himself and family was the *Kibitzer* of Bayreuth, Adolf Hitler, a failed artist and architectural fantasist, who assumed that exciting musically boosted visions could be reified by acts of will, with results that we know. After the destruction of Europe and millions of deaths, we can see at the inception of madness, not political paranoia so much as confusion about creativity. And this point suggests that the commodification of culture is no trifling matter. For in our time of postmodern chaos, it is not the marketplace that is problematical so much as the narcissism of the consumer.

The word *consumer* is one that needs a little scrutiny. A consumer would be the opposite of a producer. A consumer could not, as such, hope to engage with culture—that is say, to reflect dialectically. So a consumer could not read, say, Jane Austen—she could only misread Jane Austen as a scribbler of romances, as a source of low-energy erotic fantasy. No “regulated hatred” or irony for her! Wallowing in Gadarene luxuriance, the consumer is oinking off to the races, as she smears the pages with what's left of her Whitman sampler. I see the exemplary reader of our day, shod in flip-flops, billowed in a muumu, settling down with a Georgette Heyer or a Sidney Sheldon and half a gallon of rocky road, a frozen carrot cake, and a jug of Smearnoff, consuming her little heart away—literally. The tears come to those little pig-eyes—

difficult to see or to see out of, as they are encircled with deposits of adipose tissue—as the endorphins kick in. She's got that loving feeling, and it is going to last until—until Oprah comes on!

The big Soap Oprah is on the new flat-screen in full digital, high-definition efflorescence, and that book will have to be set aside for a while, because after all, Oprah is the one who told us what a “shlumpadinka” is, the one who led us to Dr. Phil, the one who has been beyond frank about the problems with Stedman, and the one who also periodically addresses issues of self-esteem and obesity as may be appropriate, but even more, she is the one who replaced all those dead white males such as Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Sir Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, and whomever. No amount of wealth has deterred Oprah from being recognized not merely as a sage and sybil and a sacrificial victim but also and above all as, according to Wikipedia, a “literary critic.” Oprah is prescriptive, Oprah has made selections, and Oprah speaks from authority. Though Aristotle was descriptive, though he made no selections as such, and though his authority was inherently validated, Oprah is nonetheless the Aristotle *de nos jours* because she has shown us how to read and appreciate literature.

Consumers want to watch Oprah because she has feelings, and even though she is a superior being, she has the same feelings that consumers have, and now that men have been taken down a peg and then some, she has the same feelings that men have, and that women have, and that people of all colors and orientations have. We may doubt that we have or anyone has feelings unless these sensations have been ritually validated by Oprah, who feels for us, who reflects back to us our own natures, and who therefore must regress from weight loss (as represented by the wagon of 67 pounds of fat that she pulled on

television in 1988) to resume the tragic burden of weight gain, as in her confession in the January 2009 issue of her magazine, *O*. She acknowledged that she had racked up the numbers to “the dreaded 2-0-0” and that she was “mad” and “embarrassed.” Those were her feelings about the matter, for a brutally quantitative scan of the old scale didn't register emotion.

The Big O has feelings, we have feelings, and books have feelings, and you can be sure to find a match for your needs in Oprah's selections. Some of these selections are predictable and a waste of time, and some are actually good recommendations, but the specifics are beside the point. Let's go back to the market and its subdivisions, as we see it is displayed commercially in Borders or Barnes & Noble or on Amazon. The commodification of culture is arranged in manipulative categories: “women's interest,” “feminist,” “gay and lesbian,” “black literature,” and so on. Oprah's selections have the merit of sometimes transcending such false categories, but even so, there is the baleful effect of the commodification of culture, which is the destructive and deceptive implication that culture can be bought like lipstick for a pig.

Culture is not an object that can be charged on the old credit card, so that you can show it off on your coffee table, as though you are *au courant* and engaged with the vital issues of our day. Culture is not a cheap signal but rather a struggle without end. It is not the book you read yesterday, but the one you haven't even heard of yet and which will challenge you when you get to it. Culture is neither an invaluable painting nor a cheap poster of that image, but rather the picture the artist hasn't got to yet, or even imagined. Culture is always beyond, and artists know it. We are interested in their work in ways that artists are not, and *vice versa*. Oprah talks about writers to millions, but artists don't talk about their work—or to Oprah. They get the job done and move on. 

Anabasis

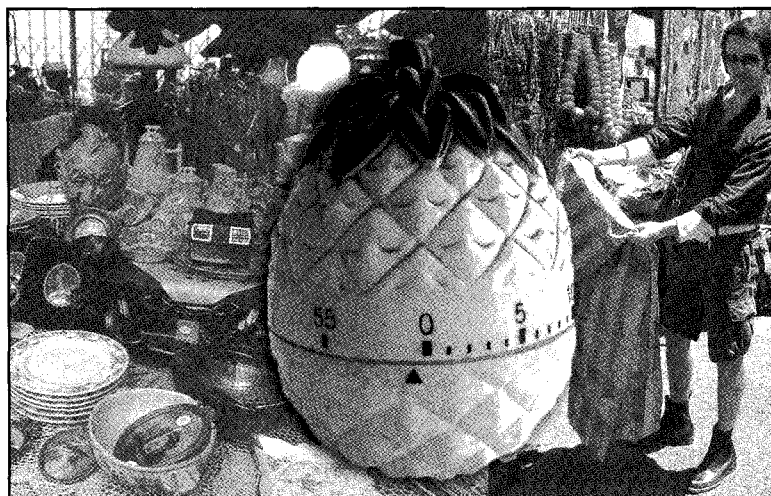
by Ralph McInerney

In the margins of my Xenophon I find the names
of ancient boys, the order of our calls to read
and parse a passage. I sought a pattern
as a stay against surprise when randomly my name
was barked and unprepared I stood to prove
the text was Greek to me. Cyrus hoodwinked
the king but I was less successful. No year was long
enough to find an order in the summons
nor has my life though long been long enough
to find in randomness a warp and woof.
But now it seems I have survived them all
and can at last foresee my final call.

Unpalatable Values

Culture as Gastronomy

by Andrei Navrozov



Melanie Anderson

To American readers the name A.A. Gill may mean nothing, but in England the restaurant and television critic of the *Sunday Times* is a cultural force to be reckoned with. A witty autodidact, with plenty of disdain for the pieties of the moment, to easily deafened ears he is a Jeremiah of the *petit-four* and British journalism's loosest cannon.

To my own callous ears, Gill is a typical New York neo-conservative. What betrays him, I dare say, is the compulsion to appear forever young by espousing opinions that old fogeys are unlikely to hold in order to appeal to the tall blondes in tight jeans and pearly cashmere sweaters whom he vaguely imagines smiling in liberated approval over the morning's skinny lattes. Scratch a neoconservative, and you will find the Nordic dream.

The other day Gill disgorged his frustration on a television program, entitled *From Farm to Pharma*, in which a former food critic from the *New Statesman* by the name of Bee Wilson, apparently neither tall nor a blonde, was found guilty of "a partisan kicking of manufactured food." Gill had even looked up the hapless woman's thesis at Cambridge, "on something like French utopian socialism," as well as a book she had written, "on adulteration, which is like adultery but with cheese." I did say Gill was witty. On the other hand, we all know the type of woman he was talking about.

Though presumably a harriidan with highly progressive

views, Wilson made light of the "modern chemical cookery" practiced by such giants of fashion gastronomy as Heston Blumenthal and "elBulli's Ferran Adria." Theirs is a cultural innovation that Gill, with an ethereal kiss in the direction of the smiling mermaids, who, after all, are renowned for eating as little and as expensively as possible, professes to admire. Hence his attack on the very "premise of the programme, that chemists and mass production had no place in our kitchens and had produced nothing but ghastliness and malnutrition." All cooking, Gill wrote,

is chemistry. Every breakfast is science. An apple tree is mass production. And the last century and a half has produced a remarkable cornucopia, a renaissance of industrially produced food. Our palates and our plates overflow with wonderful things nobody had eaten before, ingredients and dishes that are at the heart of our culture.

He concluded by listing a number of these "wonderful things," ending with chewing gum. Mermaids chew gum, don't they? At least the sugar-free kind?

I now recall the piazza in Palermo where I live. On Sundays it is transformed into the city's principal flea market. As Sicily has not a Russian Orthodox Church, it is there that I can be found most Sunday mornings. The merchandise on display ranges from 1850's rubbish to 1990's junk, allowing the visitor to draw broad conclusions and

Andrei Navrozov is *Chronicles'* European editor.

to indulge his nostalgic fetishism in relative safety, unlike the patsy in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, who, with such memorable consequences, falls for the glass paperweight.

Would anybody fall, I ask you, for the one kilogram of Motorola DynaTac 8900x mobile phone, or for the seven kilos of a Macintosh portable computer, with 1 mb of RAM, even if the seller were giving it away? A glass paperweight, on the other hand, even the shoddy, pseudo-Venetian kind that quickened the pulses of Winston Smith, is an object that I have seen change hands on more than one occasion. Eight-track tapes, sun-warped vinyl 45s, dusty Fuji cameras, paint-splattered Sony Walkmans, scratched Tupperware, faux-wicker-patterned thermoses, children's Armalite rifles with bendy bayonets, all the detritus of technological innovation in the closing decades of the last century is perfectly valueless. It is of less value to civilization than last autumn's fallen leaves, which can at least become compost.

The Russian verb *spurt*, with its sound of milk hitting the pail, is like our word for life. The forcible sundering of the peasant and his cow, no less succinctly, is the abiding aim of authoritarian government, which, abhorring the individual's self-sufficiency that threatens its nihilist absolute, seeks to suppress life itself.

In fact, there is hardly an analogy one can draw from the natural world that is resolute enough to illustrate the cruel uselessness, aesthetic as well as practical, of the technologically obsolete in the present epoch. It is a kind of *étalon* of human failure, a regulatory standard by which all bankruptcy is measured, bringing to mind the scriptural apophthegm about asking for bread and being given stones, except plastic is more indigestible than stones.

Yet pick up a mortar and pestle, and you will find that this is the very thing you need to make Genovese pesto for your Sunday lunch in A.D. 2009. Its value to civilization is exactly what it was when the appliance was first hewn from Sicilian granite 50, 80, or 100 years ago. And if the pestle happens to be missing, never mind, because the mortar alone will make a perfectly charming salt cellar for the coarse-grained sea salt of Marsala.

Sicilians browsing the flea-market stalls do not speak of usefulness. They hold a worthy object up to light—I have seen them do it once with one of those ten-inch white porcelain knobs used as industrial electrical insulators in the 1930's, and on another occasion with a still larger one, cast in greenish-purple bottle glass—stroke it tenderly, and murmur something like, "*Ecco, che bello. Mi piace da morire.*" Their elation is likewise an *étalon*, a measure of human achievement, a regulatory standard by which the cultural value of an artifact is measured.

Unlike Gill, in my youth I was a chemist, winning a prize at the U.S.S.R. Chemistry Olympiad in the Microanalysis

category at age 13. I had spent five years of my childhood chasing "superpure" and "extrasuperpure" compounds, as well as virtually unobtainable apparatus, for my home laboratory. I can confidently say that the hand-blown glass retorts and alembics I was hoarding had more in common with the Sicilian housewife's mortar and the insulators of electrification's early days than they do with "the modern chemical cookery" of Messrs. Blumenthal and Adria. That left-wing harridan, Wilson, was right. It's all just a load of rubbish, and obsolescent rubbish at that.

In his critique, Gill describes another food program as "a Stalinist rant on behalf of salad and peasants." It is no less witty for being historically inaccurate, as Stalin disliked peasants, whom he collectivized and industrialized into efficient cannon fodder until there was none left. Few are left in Europe today, as the result of collectivizations and industrializations no less ruthless, if not always quite as bloody, as Stalin's. If every joke is a fleeting glimpse of the soul of the person telling it, then surely the neoconservative joker glimpsed here, not the authors of the program, is the Stalinist factotum.

A word of explanation. I choose food, with its spectrum of associations that run from agriculture to gastronomy, as a convenient optic through which to view modern culture because cooking is something one understands viscerally. After all, housewives working out their budgets on scraps of papyrus have given civilization the academic discipline of economics, from the Greek words meaning "home governance," and I reckon it still makes sense not to wander off too much from the beaten track that is the alimentary tract.

Language itself seems to support this approach. Consider how often, on reading the first few pages of a critically acclaimed novel, we find it literally indigestible. Consider how instructive it would be, on seeing a show of new paintings in a world-famous gallery, to imagine the million-dollar daubs as a dish on our kitchen table, with crushed glass or petrified guano among the ingredients. Consider, finally, that while the critical metaphor of taste—as in "that imitation Palladian staircase is in execrable taste"—can be extended to most products of art or literature, it can hardly stretch itself to such as are downright unpalatable, like the idiot's staircase in *Anna Karenina* which does not arrive at the landing.

The Russian verb *spurt*, with its sound of milk hitting the pail, is like our word for life. The forcible sundering of the peasant and his cow, no less succinctly, is the abiding aim of authoritarian government, which, abhorring the individual's self-sufficiency that threatens its nihilist absolute, seeks to suppress life itself. Almost incidentally in this process, the artist is alienated from nature, the writer from his audience, the husband from the wife, the son from the father, and man from God. The flea-market stalls in my piazza, like the diachronic circles on a tree stump, provide a record of successive decades of that rapidly escalating estrangement. An acoustic guitar for sale in one

of the stalls reminds my wife, a musician, of the time when it was called a guitar.

When I hear of "chemical cookery," it is not that I want to denounce what I, in concert with the putative harridan Wilson, happen to see as folly. Rather, I fear that Gill's view of all cooking as chemistry is destined to become as historically inescapable as the electric guitar, because, whether or not Gill himself senses it, while sucking up to the imaginary mermaids he taps into a substantially less frivolous source of patronage, one which is, for all practical purposes, omnipotent. For it is as much in the historic interest of global authoritarianism to alienate the Russian man from his wife's borscht as it is to break up the Spanish guitarist with his flamenco guitar, the Sicilian housewife with her mortar and pestle, or this writer with this space in the magazine you are reading.

A single passage of Schubert, which I hear many times over as my wife rehearses his last sonata with the windows open onto the piazza, is a cultural commodity. Like the early electrical insulator, and unlike the obsolete in modern technology, it is an object of apparently everlasting value. In exchange for it, even when merely whistled or hummed with frost-bitten lips, it is possible to imagine a concentration-camp guard increasing the inmate's portion of slop by a life-saving dollop. No such generosity awaits Gill, as the spoiled child of the century strains to recall a tune from the Frank Zappa double gatefold *Uncle Meat*, last seen buckling in the Mediterranean sun upon

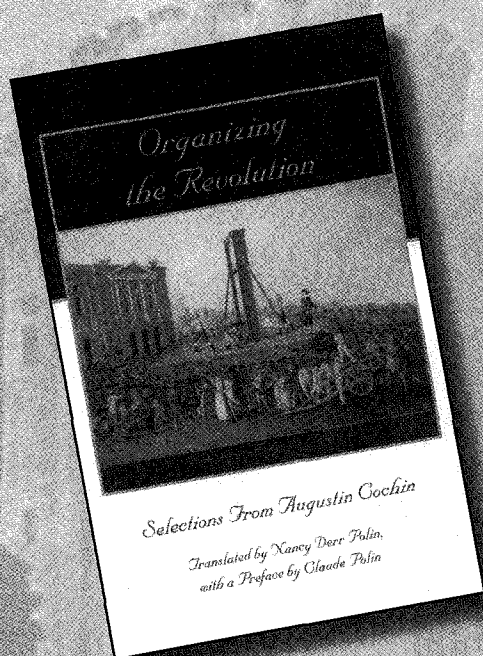
the cobblestones of the piazza. As for trying to whistle something thrown up by the avant-garde of classical music in the West since the 1960's, under these admittedly extreme conditions it would probably get one shot.

To get that extra dollop, and to survive in these last times, an artist will need the ability to produce a likeness and an architect will need to know how one hangs a door. A poet would have to be able to recite verse by heart, and a writer is well advised to make his audience crack up with laughter. Unpalatable, indigestible, valueless rubbish, abstruse theories of space and pretentious slices of life—in every way comparable to the detritus of modernity in my piazza of a Sunday—will get them nowhere. Their chemical cookery is only good as a tool of alienation, subsidized by an evermore authoritarian government out of the pockets of a populace too cowed by culture to cry stop thief.

In a forgotten short story by Ivan Shmelev, set in the Russian Civil War, a band of Muslim guerrillas ambush a Red sympathizer, a distinguished university professor, in a mountain pass in the Caucasus. They trot out a plaster bust of Darwin and, on pain of death, make him spit on it. "Funny," says the guerrilla commander when the terrified savant complies, "we had a White officer here the other day, and we told him to spit on the Crucifix. He's over there in the ravine."

Values are values. I wonder if Gill would not spit on a bust of elBulli's Ferran Adria even if threatened only with indigestion. 

FROM CHRONICLES PRESS



Organizing the Revolution

Selections From Augustin Cochin

translated by Nancy Derr Polin

Preface by Claude Polin

Augustin Cochin (1876-1916) undertook a minute analysis of the role that provincial clubs and societies played in the genesis of the French Revolution. His work shows clearly how the revolution was organized long before the events of 1789. This translation is an attempt to present his unfinished writings in a clear and coherent form.

Softcover • 239 pages • \$24.95
includes shipping and handling
Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery

- send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61107
- make checks payable to The Rockford Institute
- call 800-383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover
- purchase online at the webstore on ChroniclesMagazine.org

Watching the Money

Brought to You by Nokia™

by George McCartney

It's Friday evening, and you have arrived at your local multiplex with your ten- and twelve-year-old boys and two of their very closest friends. You've come to see the best movie \$150 million can make. You cannot remember just when, but it seems you idly mentioned to your wife earlier in the week that you might take the boys to the 11th coming of Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock. The boys, of course, understood this casual aside to be a solemn promise—a contract tighter than Mr. Spock's paralyzing trapezius pinch. When you reach the ticket counter, you pay the \$38 for admission with your Visa card. Distressing, yes, but not as much as that PG-13 rating you belatedly noticed just inside the theater. Now that it's too late, you recall the small print in the newspaper ad: "some science fiction violence" and "brief sexual content." But the die is irretrievably cast, so you resignedly go where most dads have gone before and will go again.

What are you getting for your money? Not art, certainly. Like other movies of its kind, *Star Trek* is a cleverly packaged commodity. Director J.J. Abrams' real mission was not to tell a story but to manage the consistency of the *Star Trek* product. He didn't direct the movie; he took charge of quality control. Paramount wanted to ensure the franchise's profitability. That meant making something similar to what they had made before. But William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, and Patrick Stewart, now in their 70's, no longer look appealing in the series stretch-cotton uniforms. What to do? Abrams' solution was to remake Kirk and Spock with youthful actors selected for their plausible resemblance to Shatner and Nimoy in their prime. He further had his writers concoct a contorted narrative to reboot the franchise. Using the stale conceit of time-travel discombobulation, screenwriters Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman have created an alternate timeline for Kirk and Spock. This way the old adventures can be preserved for continued DVD sales while the new installments can be developed without being overly slavish to the earlier episodes. And as with so many other American commodities, this one's been designed to encourage you to consume still more. For starters, there's the theater's concession stand. That's why you paid admission with your credit card. You knew you would need cash in your wallet to pay \$18.75 for five sodas and \$9.90 for two titanic tubs of popcorn buttered with genuine artificially flavored hydrogenated coconut oil.

George McCartney is *Chronicles'* film editor.

Once you're in your seats, other commodities confront you. Although James T. Kirk lives in the 23rd century, he drives a 1970 Corvette. As the script helpfully explains, it's vintage. Don't worry. You'll probably be able to convince your sons the Corvette will have to come second to their college education. Kirk's Nokia cellphone may pose a problem, however. The Finnish company has made *Star Trek* editions of it complete with *Star Trek* ringtones—models affordably priced at only \$329 to \$529. To keep up with these and the gadgets likely to come, just follow Spock's advice: Live long and prosper.

From the moment *Star Trek* was in production, Paramount set their publicists to work. In the final two weeks before D-Day, the invasion force hit the media beaches. The film's stars began showing up on *Entertainment Tonight* and *Access Hollywood*. They confided to David Letterman, Jay Leno, Jimmy Fallon, and even master ironist Jon Stewart that, as kids, they dreamed of being in a *Star Trek* movie. What's more, they did their own stunts. Well, mostly. And let's not forget the action figures.

By the time *Star Trek* arrived at your multiplex, it had transcended its origins. No longer a mere movie, it had become an unstoppable, worldwide, cross-cultural, mass-marketing force bulldozing its way into your home.

Like Pepsi, Hollywood franchise movies are ubiquitous commodities. Even if you don't go to see them, you will be forced to notice them by dint of the distributors' relentless promotion. No wonder Marxists used to take offense at such crassly commercial enterprises. In the last century, they would point their ideological fingers and mutter imprecations against "commodity fetishism" and "American cultural imperialism." I recall Michael Keaton giving some color to these Marxist charges, however inadvertently. It was 1989, communism was staggering to its demise, and the first of the big *Batman* movies opened in June. As the star of this comic-book film, Keaton had been doing his capitalist duty, making the usual promotional rounds. Stopping by the *Tonight Show*, he told Johnny Carson how strange it was to find himself suddenly propelled to such an eminent plane of celebrity. While walking in Manhattan he had been startled to see his own face, shrouded in the Batman cowl and blown up to Brobdingnagian proportions, scowling down on him from the side of a passing bus. Never one to say the obvious, Keaton didn't belabor the political implications of his experience, but I will. Marxist moments just don't

come any purer than this. Here was the perfect instance of commodity fetishism in action, the worker intimately confronted by his alienation from the commodity his own labor had produced. Holy class struggle!

There is no need to enlist the pedantic Marxist vocabulary of economic analysis to register how strange the ubiquitous presence of film has become in our lives since its humble origins in 1890's nickelodeons. Evelyn Waugh said it plainly in 1929 when he declared that film was "the one vital art of the century." He went on to say that it was unlikely the medium would ever produce anything valuable. Like many novelists in the first decades of the last century, Waugh recognized film's strengths. Its storytelling power, he judged, had a speed, economy, and immediacy the page could not match. But the medium's cost would always hobble its potential. To justify its expense, a film would have to attract an audience of tens of millions at the least. This meant in practice making entertainments that pleased everyone, including the least discriminating, a situation hardly conducive to achieving artistic excellence.

Waugh, as always, was right. Consider the economics of film's nearest competitor in storytelling, the novel. A novel begins to turn a profit when sales exceed 7,000 copies. Now consider *Star Trek* with its \$150 million cost. If only 7,001 souls showed up to see James T. Kirk and Mr. Spock pursue another mission to spread tolerance across the universe, the *Star Trek* product would disappear from the shelves permanently—unless President Obama could be persuaded to take over Paramount.

Whether or not we think of movies as commodities, their producers always have. Although screenwriter Ben Hecht helped make some pretty good movies, he evidently did not have an exalted sense of his profession. "There's no art to the film," he once told an interviewer. "There never was, any more than there is to making toilet seats or socks or sausages. It's a commodity for mass consumption." The movie industry in America was largely started by people who adhered to a commercial line when it came to their craft. Many were men who had either emigrated from Eastern Europe or were born to those who had. Typically, they began their business careers as merchants selling their wares on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Adolph Zukor had begun his career as a New York upholsterer and moved to Chicago to become a furrier before founding Paramount Pictures. Samuel Goldwyn, né Goldfish, had been a glove salesman before moving to Los Angeles. Louis B. Mayer had taken up his father's trade dealing in scrap metal before he set the lion roaring. And let's not forget Joseph P. Kennedy, the Boston bootlegger who came to Hollywood worth a million in 1926 and stayed long enough to buy four studios and multiply his money five times over, a stakehold that served as the foundation of his dynastic ambitions and our woe. As different as these men were, they had in common a devotion to making money by any means necessary. They got into filmmaking because they correctly foresaw it was the next

big thing. Their earlier trades schooled them in the art of ruthless negotiation. At the same time, they liked to project themselves as the master-builders of a new art form who were contributing mightily to American culture. As early as 1929, they invented the grandly named Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to give their industry a patina of respectability. But these guys rarely took their eyes off the prize. They went west to Los Angeles for the moviemaking weather and the complaisant women, but they went most of all for the gold in those Hollywood hills. Now, as any financier will tell you, to make and hold on to money requires avoiding undue risks. Once these producers took their initial start-up chances, they frowned on latecomers who wanted to experiment in what they came to think of as their medium. Like other businessmen, they liked to stay with material that had succeeded with customers already. This is one reason why from its outset Hollywood loved adapting classic novels. *Moby-Dick* came with its own built-in audience: all those schoolkids who had been made to wade perplexedly through Melville's turbid waters and now wanted to find out what all the fuss was about. In 1930, Warner Brothers told them and improved on the gloomy original in the process. The studio transformed Captain Ahab into a romantically coiffed John Barrymore and had him fatally harpoon the leg-chomping Moby. Why, he even got to come home to his lady love! The important thing about the novel was neither its plot nor its ideas. It was its name-recognition. You can't push a commodity successfully if the public doesn't recognize it. That's why Madison Avenue invented branding.

Today's sequel moviemaking is a variation on this tradition. If a movie succeeds at the box office, then its brand is established and will likely succeed again. Why tamper with a winning formula? Give the audience what they want. This is not always a bad thing. Last year New Line Cinema brought out an adaptation of Philip Pullman's insidious *Golden Compass*, the first installment of his children's trilogy, *His Dark Materials*. The studio and its director eagerly looked forward to adapting the other two volumes. The public, however, had another idea. As Sam Goldwyn would have said, they stayed away in droves. It seems they did not want to see a film intent on teaching children that there is no God and that those who profess to believe in Him are a band of scheming, treacherous powermongers. This year's Marxist-flavored comic-book extravaganza *Watchmen* will likely suffer the same fate. It performed woefully with capitalist consumers who were less than enthralled by a story line that recommends we follow Stalin's advice and kill several hundred million people in the course of building the just and healthily green society.

Most investors put their money into a film project as they would buy pork-belly futures. Their principal concern is with profit. There's nothing wrong with this in itself. But it does mean that most movies are going to be produced based on purely commercial calculations. Quality won't come into it. A movie may be devoid of any of the known hallmarks of imagination and intelligence and still be made

to succeed wildly at the box office. The easiest and surest way to accomplish this is to brand the film with an iconic star. "Hey, want to see that Tom Cruise movie tonight?" Yes, something crummy often takes place when commodification sets in. Some John Wayne movies that once beguiled all America now leave me wondering. Was *Rooster Cogburn*, the sequel to *True Grit*, really good, or was it just reassuringly a John Wayne commodity? The Marxist would have us focus only on the commodity's intrinsic worth, its "use value," demanding that we drop frivolous considerations such as celebrity, which marketers deploy in the cause of inflating profit margins. But, as always, the Marxists are making utopian judgments. Admittedly, the free market is clotted with crass goods. But what is the alternative? State-subsidized movies? How many times can we watch *Battleship Potemkin* and *Triumph of the Will*?

Will the marketplace finally succeed in embalming the one vital art of the century, leaving us with nothing but remakes starring the same small pool of actors reprising the same genre plots? Movie producers who travel this road claim they are just giving the public what it wants. But what does the public want?

One possible answer can be found in the proliferation of websites, such as *Box Office Mojo*, that track movie receipts. It seems there is a vast public appetite for news of how much money each new release takes in on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. It's the same kind of obsession that drives sports fans frantic to learn the ups and downs of salary negotiations between star athletes and the franchises that employ them. In both venues, the amounts of money at stake have been cleverly converted into one more promotional tool. Reasons to cheer or boo A-Rod turn less on his performance than on the salary he commands. Similarly, studios routinely announce how much a film cost as though the amount they have spent on *Star Trek* were somehow a guarantee of its entertainment value. Here again our Marxist analyst will be scandalized, and, in this instance, I sympathize with him. It's dispiriting to consider how often an inverse proportion obtains between a film's budget and its resulting quality. Then again, as Waugh predicted, this is almost inevitable. If you laid out \$150 million on a film, how likely would you be to take a chance on an untried actor, a daring theme, an experimental director, or an idealistic scenarist? No, when the money gets this big, one consideration is paramount: R.O.I., return on investment. This calculation affects even the most modestly budgeted films. In 1948, Vittorio De Sica approached David O. Selznick to raise the money he needed to make *The Bicycle Thief*. The American producer grandly agreed to back the Italian on one condition: De Sica would have to give the lead role of the unemployed worker to Cary Grant. Preposterous? Not from Selznick's vantage. Grant, had he agreed to the part, would have branded the movie. Selznick was merely trying to guarantee that the project would be investment grade, as the financiers say. Of course, De Sica went elsewhere and made what is still recognized

as an uncompromising if mildly Marxist masterpiece. Still, this is one instance when I wish commodity capitalism had prevailed. Imagine Cary Grant in overalls cycling through Rome, stopping here and there to paste a hoarding with a film poster of Rita Hayworth at her most luscious. Can't you hear Cary crooning in his inimitably denatured cockney, "Ree-tah, Ree-tah, Ree-tah"? As commodities go, this one would have been a joy to behold.

There's an apposite scene in *Quiz Show*, Robert Redford's excellent analysis of American class differences through the prism of mass entertainment. It features Martin Rittenhome, a fictionalized version of the CEO of Geritol, the sole sponsor of *Twenty-One*, the hugely successful and thoroughly fixed television quiz show of the 1950's. The executive is being interviewed by investigating attorney Richard Goodwin, who wants to know about the contestant coaching on *Twenty-One*. After skillfully eluding Goodwin's probes, Rittenhome smiles wolfishly. He is untroubled by the demise of his fabulously successful advertising outlet. "The quiz shows will be back," he assures Goodwin. And they will not be fixed the next time around. "Why bother? You could accomplish the same thing just by making the questions easier. The audience wasn't tuning in to watch some amazing display of intellectual ability. They just wanted to watch the money."

Watching the money. Is this the sole arbiter of taste among American filmgoers today?

Fortunately, there's a story beyond the money school of aesthetic appreciation. Hollywood may have tired-blood syndrome, but, surprisingly, each year brings a lively lineup, however meager, of aesthetically and intellectually ambitious films. If predicted R.O.I. were the only gauge, would Preston Sturges have been allowed to make *Sullivan's Travels* in 1941? Would Elia Kazan have been permitted to bring *On the Waterfront* to the screen in 1954? And last year, would Bryan Singer have been given the go-ahead for *Valkyrie* or Thomas McCarthy for *The Visitor*? Although hardly Hollywood, the Israeli-Palestinian team who made the honest and bracing *Lemon Tree* last year are doubtless depending on the American audience's continuing interest in the Middle East's seemingly inexhaustible flashpoint to recoup some of their investment. Even *Duplicity*, Tony Gilroy's lighthearted comedy, gave cause for rejoicing a few months ago, although everyone knows it will take in an infinitesimal fraction of the proceeds *Transformers II* will yield. It can't boast of a single shapeshifting Camaro product placement, and there's not a single scene in which someone reaches for a Mountain Dew instead of a Martini. Gilroy's film has only this to recommend it: a smart, funny script given life by some of the best actors working today, especially Tom Wilkinson and Paul Giamatti. That it skewers corporate America's obsession with watching the money is a pleasing grace note in its satiric symphony.

It seems film's vitality will always call forth the medium's risk takers. It's nice to make money; it's ecstasy to make art. 

The \$15 Trillion End Run

An "Oligarchy of Interests"

by William J. Quirk

“Another Crisis like this one and the West will be wiped out,” said German Chancellor Angela Merkel on June 1. “Once we have overcome this Crisis, the question will be how can we return to a path of virtue as far as public debts are concerned.” Of course, the first question is whether the West will, in fact, survive the present crisis. All the Western governments have decided to bail out their financial systems with taxpayer “money.” Then again, as President Obama said on May 23, “we are out of money now.” What our government is actually doing is bailing out the financial system with debt, which amounts to promises the government makes on behalf of the next generation. The trouble is that neither the next generation nor the current one has authorized the government to make such promises. In September 2008, the Bush administration told Congress that we would all be doomed if we did not bail out the financial system. Congress first resisted but then authorized \$700 billion. But the voters reacted badly, and Congress, since then, has been clear that it will not authorize another dime to bail out the banks. The people hate the Bailout.

The Constitution provides that “No money shall be drawn from the Treasury but in consequence of appropriations made by law,” which sounds like you need Congress to raise the money and authorize bailout spending. Nonetheless, the Bush and Obama administrations have committed \$15 trillion, according to the *Wall Street Journal* (June 10), in cash, purchases, guarantees, and loans to finance the Bailout. The Bailout used the Federal Reserve and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) as vehicles to perform an end run around democracy. The Bailout has now been running since September 2008 and has developed its own culture—nondemocratic, lawless, and inclined to strong-arm tactics whenever it is deemed necessary.

The bank losses exist; there is no question of that. The IMF reports global bank losses of \$4.1 trillion. The only question is where the losses will fall—on the banks who caused them or on the taxpayers. The government and banks agree the taxpayers should pay. The public does not agree—any congressman voting for more money for the banks will likely be defeated in the next election.

Congress has surrendered control of, and responsibility

for, the Bailout to the President. The Supreme Court has signaled it will not interfere. This joint abdication leaves the field open for the President and the theoretically independent Federal Reserve. The government, using the Federal Reserve, the FDIC, and the Treasury, has set up an alphabet soup of 27 programs to bail out the banks and particular businesses.

Treasury programs include the Temporary Money Market Funds Guarantee Program; the Obama stimulus package, \$800 billion; the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), \$700 billion; the GSE Bailout; the Bush stimulus, \$168 billion; student-loan purchases; the Treasury Exchange Stabilization Fund (ESF); and tax breaks for banks. (The Temporary Money Market Funds Guarantee Program was announced by the Treasury in September 2008. It was originally scheduled to expire on April 30, but it has been extended to September 18. A Treasury press release dated March 31 states, “The Program currently covers over \$3 trillion of combined fund assets.” The Treasury has not cited any statutory authority that permits it to guarantee any amount, much less three trillion dollars. This action is lawless.)

FDIC programs include the Public-Private Investment Program (PPIP); debt guarantees for the TLG Program; and an asset guarantee to Citigroup/Bank of America.

Federal Reserve programs include funding for the Commercial Paper Funding Facility (CPFF); the Term Auction Facility (TAF); the Term ABS Loan Facility (TALF, which has bought \$27 billion in securities backed by credit-card debt, car loans, and student loans); currency swaps; the Money Market Investor Funding Facility (MMIFF); the MBS Purchase Program; the Term Securities Lending Facility; the U.S. Treasuries Purchase Program; the AIG credit extension; GSE Debt Purchase Program; the primary credit discount; the Primary Dealers Credit Facility (PDCF); Maiden Lane, LLC; ABCP Money Market Fund Liquidity (AMLF); Securities Lending Overnight; and secondary credit. Only around ten percent of the Bailout has any democratic legitimacy—the \$700 billion TARP and the \$950 billion in Bush and Obama administration stimulus programs were enacted by Congress.

When the Federal Reserve was created by act of Congress in 1913, its stated purpose was to establish “Federal Reserve banks, to furnish an elastic currency, to afford means of rediscounting commercial paper to establish a more effective supervision of banking in the United States . . .” The Fed is

William Quirk is the author, most recently, of Courts & Congress. Janek Kazmierski, a third-year law student, gave invaluable assistance in the preparation of this article.

intended to guide the economy by setting interest rates and controlling the money supply; it is not intended to finance businesses. The Fed is authorized to issue Federal Reserve notes—what we call money. Its notes are its liabilities; it needs assets to balance its liabilities. The Fed's balance sheet, in response to the financial crisis, will balloon to more than three trillion dollars from not even one trillion dollars less than two years ago. The Fed has bought, with new money, some dubious assets—toxic and legacy assets and agency debt (Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac).

The Fed is central to the Bailout. Since the summer of 2007, it has created the new programs listed above, citing the authority of Section 13(3) of the Federal Reserve Act. This section, which has not been used since the Great Depression, authorizes the Federal Reserve Board, "in unusual and exigent circumstances . . . to discount for any individual, partnership, or corporation, notes, drafts and bills of exchange when such notes, drafts and bills of exchange are indorsed or otherwise secured to the satisfaction of the Federal Reserve bank." The statute further provides that the Fed "shall obtain evidence that such individual, partnership, or corporation is unable to secure adequate credit accommodations from other banking institutions." The previous and only use of Section 13(3) occurred between 1932 and 1936 and provided approximately \$1.5 million in loans (around \$23 million in today's dollars). On January 19, the New York Fed's general counsel said that, while the Fed must act within the parameters of the law, "we will interpret our legal mandate in a manner that facilitates our policy objectives."

The purpose of the Federal Reserve System was to create an entity independent of the Treasury. The nation's resources should be allocated by the government and business—not by the central bank. And yet, under the auspices of the Bailout, the Fed buys U.S. bonds from the Treasury with newly printed Federal Reserve notes, which the Treasury will spend. Economists call this "monetizing" the debt. The Fed intends, by the end of August, to purchase \$300 billion of debt from the Treasury under this program. Obviously, there is no need for the Chinese if the government can finance itself by buying its own debt.

As the auto industry weakened, the CEOs of the Big Three asked Congress to fund a bailout. That was necessary because TARP funds, under the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, can only be used for "Financial Institutions"—TARP is not a general slush fund for the Treasury to spend at will, and a car company is not a financial institution. Congress refused to authorize the auto bailout, but President Bush went ahead and gave Chrysler and GM an initial bridge loan of \$17.4 billion from the TARP money. President Obama increased the loans to a total of \$85 billion—\$63 billion for GM, \$17 billion for Chrysler, and another \$5 billion to suppliers in exchange for preferred stock and warranties.

Without any new legislation, the President and his automobile czar pushed through the Chrysler bankruptcy.

President Obama chastised the objecting creditors, calling them speculators and saying they would be responsible for Chrysler's liquidation and all the lost jobs that would follow. Three Indiana state pension funds brought suit, arguing the President's bankruptcy was illegal because the bankruptcy court was rolling over the existing rights of secured creditors and the government had no standing to bring any action because it was not a shareholder, since Chrysler is not a financial institution and (therefore) the TARP transaction was null and void. The funds compared the President's takeover of Chrysler to President Truman's 1952 seizure of the steel mills, which the Supreme Court found unconstitutional (*Youngstown Sheet and Tube v. Sawyer*). The lower courts upheld the President, and on June 11, the Supreme Court refused to hear the Indiana funds' appeal. The Founding Fathers despised the king's judges, and many feared that a separate judicial branch would be largely unaccountable and dangerous. The Constitutional Convention, however, concluded it was critical to establish a real check on the legislature and executive. The convention granted the justices lifetime tenure to assure the Court's independence, which would allow it to decide controversial cases fairly. The pension funds' arguments are substantial, and the country would have been served by a public debate of the Bailout's legality. Instead, the judicial branch joined Congress on the sidelines as spectators.

Backers of the Bailout are quite willing to use strong-arm tactics when they believe it necessary. In September 2008, Bank of America entered into an agreement to acquire Merrill Lynch, which was scheduled to close on January 1, 2009. By December, however, the bank discovered Merrill's losses were much larger than previously reported. The Fed's own analyst suggested that "Merrill was a black hole." Bank of America sought to rescind the merger, a move permitted by a provision of the contract called a MAC (Material Adverse Change) clause. But on December 21, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson—with Fed Chairman Bernanke present—told the bank's CEO, Ken Lewis, "I'm going to be very blunt, we're very supportive of Bank of America and want to be of help but the government does not feel it's in your best interest for you to call a MAC and that we feel so strongly, we would remove the board and management if you called it."

Paulson also told Mr. Lewis that he should not inform the bank's shareholders of the Merrill losses or their little chat. The next day, Bernanke e-mailed another Fed officer: "[Lewis] said he now fears lawsuits from shareholders. I don't think that's very likely and said so." Lewis wanted a letter from the Fed saying they had ordered him to complete the merger, but Bernanke refused. Bernanke asked whether he could assure Lewis that the Fed would help if he was sued. Fed counsel advised him not to. Lewis's notes from a New Year's Eve phone call indicate that Bernanke said, "We will not leave you in the lurch." Bank of America went ahead with the merger, and Paulson and Bernanke effectively imposed Merrill's losses on BofA's shareholders. Lewis's fears have been realized,

and a class-action lawsuit is pending. Lewis testified to the House Committee on Oversight on June 11 that the Paulson and Bernanke threats were made “with the best of intentions.”

The Bailout’s central deceit is that the “toxic” or “legacy” assets held by the banks are worth more than anyone will pay for them. If the banks sold them, they would have to recognize at least one trillion dollars of losses, which would bust most of them. According to accounting rules, however, even if the assets are not sold they are required to be “marked to market.” This is necessary to keep the banks’ balance sheets honest. Facing bankruptcy, the banks argued that they should be excused from the requirement; the market had become too dysfunctional to set values properly. Could the accounting rule please be changed?

In early 2009, the nine largest financial firms formed the CDS Dealers Consortium, and the new entity gave \$18,500 to Rep. Paul Kanjorski (D-PA), chairman of the House Financial Services Subcommittee. Kanjorski summoned the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) to a hearing on March 12, where he issued them a threat: “If the regulators and standard setters do not act now to improve the standards, then, the Congress will have no other option than to act itself. We want you to act. . . . You do understand the message that we’re sending?”

A representative of the FASB replied, “Yes, I absolutely do, sir.”

The FASB revised the rules to permit the banks to continue cooking the books. Citigroup said the accounting change added \$413 million to its first-quarter earnings. The banks then dumped the Public-Private Investment Program—an FDIC plan to use taxpayer guarantees to buy the “legacy” assets from the banks at above-market prices.

If the books were kept honestly, most of our banks would have gone bust. The risk of busted banks should be transferred back to the private sector where it belongs—from the taxpayer to the shareholders and creditors who were supposed to prevent the banks from taking the grotesque risks they did. More than half a million jobs have vanished each month since October 2008. Official unemployment is at 9.4 percent; if all marginally attached workers are included, the figure is 16.4 percent—approaching Great Depression levels. The net worth of American households has plummeted by 20 percent. Total worldwide losses of capital valuation of financial assets, according to the Asian Development Bank, may reach \$50 trillion—the equivalent of one year of world GDP. U.S. GDP has fallen at an annual rate of six percent.

The problem with governmental intervention is that you cannot be sure where you are—whether you have reached the bottom or have a good deal further to fall. Neither the Bush nor Obama administration has made an effort to explain what brought the system down. In the 1930’s, the Senate Banking Committee, led by a special counsel, Ferdinand Pecora, held two years of hearings to determine exactly what had happened. Pecora questioned the nation’s bankers and stockbrokers. The

hearings revealed to the public the bankers’ abusive practices—many of which have now been repeated. This led to reform legislation (including the Glass-Steagall Act), which kept the system honest until the Depression-era regulations were repealed by the Clinton administration, at the suggestion of Larry Summers and Timothy Geithner, in 1999 and 2000. This ushered in a period of rapid growth in new and complex inventions, including derivatives, credit-default swaps, and collateralized debt obligations. When the crash came, hardly anyone had ever heard of these things.

With the Bailout in place, the banks are unrepentant of their abusive practices. In fact, they seem to be in charge of the Bailout and the Obama administration’s proposals for regulatory “reform,” which will leave derivatives largely untouched by federal regulation. Derivatives (what Warren Buffett calls “weapons of financial mass destruction”) should be banned. They are traded today as if nothing happened. Indeed, the credit-default-swap market is booming again, because the players now believe the bets are backed by the U.S. taxpayers. Before the crash, the market was constrained by what is called “counterparty risk,” which meant that your insurer—AIG, for example—might go bust and not pay out your winning bet. But in September 2008, Paulson, Bernanke, and Timothy Geithner used taxpayer money to bail out AIG so it could pay out Goldman-Sachs and the European banks on their bets. The market now assumes that the U.S. taxpayer will continue to make all such wagers winning bets.

Louis XV could tell you that the longer real reforms are put off, the more severe will be the ultimate correction. On June 3, Thomas Hoenig, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, warned that, “if we hesitate to make needed changes, we will perpetuate an oligarchy of interests that will fail to serve the best interests of business, the consumer and the U.S. economy.”

The first step in any serious reform should be to restore the Glass-Steagall Act, which kept the banks from functioning like casinos. On June 17, President Obama unveiled his proposed reforms to the financial system. They will grant yet more power to the unaccountable Fed. Glass-Steagall is not mentioned.

The derivatives market is vast (\$680 trillion) and opaque. Some sunshine would help. The Obama administration, however, only proposes that most—but not all—of the derivatives be run through exchanges. Even that pitiful reform is too much for Representative Kanjorski. At a June 9 hearing he said, “Subjecting all contracts to mandatory exchange trading may cast too wide a net.” His Republican counterpart, Scott Garrett (R-NJ), is equally soft on the banks: “The government should not regulate the heck out of them.”

Chancellor Merkel wanted to know how, after this Crisis, the United States is going to return to a “path of virtue.” She should probably forget about asking the people’s representatives in the U.S. Congress. 

Measuring Decline By Prices

In 1939, the year I was born, gasoline was ten cents per gallon. A new car cost \$700. A new house cost \$3,850, and the average rent was \$28 per month. Harvard tuition was \$420 annually.

A loaf of bread from the bakery was eight cents. Hamburger was 14¢ per pound, eggs were 19¢ per dozen, coffee was 40¢ per pound, and sugar was 59¢ for 10 pounds.

The average annual income was \$1,729.

I don't remember these prices. By the time I was six years old, World War II had ended, and the postwar U.S. inflation was about to begin. Still, I remember as a five- or six-year-old being sent to the bakery with 9, 10 or 11¢ to get a loaf of bread, and to the grocery store with 15¢ to get a quart of milk.

Milk and bread were not ordinarily purchased in stores. In the Atlanta of my youth the breadman and milkman made home deliveries in horse-drawn vehicles. Mathis Dairy was so clean that the milk was not pasteurized. The cream was at the top.

Movie admission was 10¢ for 12 years old and under, and 25¢ for adults. A Coca-Cola or a Pepsi (which was twice the size of the Coke), was 5¢, and so was a candy bar. A case (24) of Coke or Pepsi was one dollar. I flinch every time I see a person put a dollar into a machine for one Coke.

There was deposit on the bottles. Kids could collect discarded bottles from construction sites or park garbage bins. At grocery stores, three bottles traded for a candy bar and two pieces of bubble gum. Five bottles brought ten cents, enough for the Saturday-afternoon double-feature.

Our movies were not violent. Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy, and the Lone Ranger never killed anyone. They shot the pistol out of the hand of the bad guy, knocked him out with a right to the jaw, tied him over his horse, and delivered him to the

sheriff, who never seemed to be up to catching the outlaws.

I still remember how shocked we were the first time the good guy killed the bad one on screen. If memory serves, it was a Randolph Scott movie, which in the late 1940's displaced the more gentle cowboy films. Still, it was a long way from the Clint Eastwood westerns, such as *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, let alone *Unforgiven*.

We rode our bikes everywhere. No one had a lock, which would have cost five movies. We could even ride our bikes at night to Ponce de Leon Park to watch the Atlanta Crackers. We just dropped our bikes outside the entrance, and they were there on our return.

No one bothered us. The only danger we faced was from our own recklessness on two wheels, jumping curbs and dodging obstacles.

We were never inside except when rainy days confined us to reading and board games.

Despite the postwar inflation, by the time I had a driver's license and was of dating age, one dollar would buy three gallons of gasoline, enough for a Saturday-night date. Five dollars would fill the tank. Movies had gone up to 50¢. A steak sandwich at a drive-in afterward was 35¢, and a coke was a dime. A three-bedroom, one-bath home could be purchased for ten or eleven thousand dollars. Anyone with one million dollars was very rich. Even in the mid-1960's, a \$10,000 annual income was enough for a one-earner family and a good credit rating.

Today, my tale sounds like legends from a distant past, and the Bush/Obama inflation is not yet under way. Today, the cost of a home in the 1960's wouldn't remodel a kitchen.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a still much-beloved U.S. president, might go down in history as the man who destroyed America. Roosevelt confiscated America's money. He forced

Americans to turn in their gold money and accept fiat paper in its place at 20 paper dollars to the ounce. Once he had all the gold, he raised the price to \$35 per ounce.

Gold can't be printed, but paper money can. Reflecting this fact, today gold is \$1,000 per ounce and could be \$2,000 per ounce by year's end or the end of next year.

With Roosevelt and thereafter until President Nixon, gold was the backing for the U.S. dollar in international trade, but not for the money in domestic commerce. America retained some commodity money. Silver certificates in one-dollar and five-dollar denominations existed until the mid-to-late 60's, when the silver was taken out of the coins. The copper penny survived until the Reagan administration.

I remember the U.S. Treasury meeting in 1981 when I, as assistant secretary, tried to save the copper penny with the argument that if we could not afford an honest penny, why would anyone believe we were going to cure stagflation? How could the Treasury expect Wall Street to believe that we would subdue double-digit inflation when we were about to announce that we could not afford a copper penny?

Supply-side economics saved the day. The monetary/fiscal policy mix was reversed, inflation was subdued, and employment picked up. That was then. Today, policymakers have nothing with which to save us from a two-trillion-dollar budget deficit in FY 2009 and another two-trillion-dollar budget deficit in 2010, and unknown but undoubtedly massive deficits in subsequent years.

In FY 2008 the official federal budget deficit was \$455 billion. In 2009 it is four times larger.

In the past our budget deficits have been financed by our trading partners, who recycle their trade surpluses by purchasing U.S. debt instruments. Their trade surpluses can handle \$400

billion deficits, but not deficits four or five times as large.

If the U.S. stock market has another leg down to a Dow Jones average of four, five, or six thousand, fear may send investors fleeing equities into "safe" U.S. treasuries. Unless this happens, the only other way to finance a two-trillion-dollar budget deficit is to print money.

When a Treasury bond auction is not successful, the Federal Reserve steps in and buys the bonds. It pays for the bonds by creating demand-deposit accounts for the Treasury. Thus, the money supply increases by the amount of the Fed's bond purchase.

Currently, the U.S. money supply is about \$1.4 trillion as measured by M1 (the total amount of currency in circulation, plus checkable deposits, plus travelers' checks) as of April 2008. If the 2009 budget deficit is monetized, the U.S. money supply will double in one year. If the 2010 deficit is monetized, the U.S. money supply will have tripled in two years.

Despite double-digit unemployment and falling real-estate and equity prices, this means inflation. Our foreign creditors, on whom we are dependent, will cease to extend credit. The United States, an import-dependent economy, will not be able to pay for her imports.

Shortages will appear, which will aggravate the inflation. Fuel deliveries will be disrupted, and grocery stores will at times have empty shelves.

The next step could be that wholesalers would sell to people who have gold and silver, bypassing retail stores, unless the retail stores follow suit and sell to customers who have gold and silver instead of depreciating paper.

Fear and unrest would grow.

The U.S. military, which could not successfully occupy Baghdad, would not be able to occupy the United States.

If Roosevelt had not destroyed the gold basis of the U.S. dollar, we would not be facing these horrors.

Once the Romans debased their currency, they were finished. I have a "silver" denarius from the later empire period. Essentially, it is lead.

But even the Roman lead is worth more than the paper that will be printed to finance the U.S. government's annual budgets for 2009 and 2010, which are 50 percent in the red.

In one lifetime the United States will have passed from superpower to Third World beggar. An amazing compression of history. The fall of Rome took centuries. 

Mexico Way

A NOVEL BY

Chilton Williamson, Jr.

When retired U.S. Customs Bureau inspector Samuel Adams White (to his ex-wife, "the most boring human being") is abducted south of the border by Mexican drug smugglers, he is given the chance to flee for his life. Desperately trying to reach the border, he is pursued across the deserts of rural Mexico. Through a series of hair-raising adventures, the inspector discovers self-reliance, resourcefulness, the reality of the natural world—and of romance. The reader discovers the profound differences, as well as their origins and implications, between Mexican culture and that of El Norte, her neighbor across the Rio Grande. The tale is suffused with Williamson's understanding of and sympathy for a people among whom he is well traveled.

Softcover

\$21.95 (incl. s&h)

To order, call
(800) 383-0680

Under the Black Flag

by Taki Theodoracopulos

Laugh Riot

If you think comedy is dead, just read Benjamin Netanyahu's latest proposals regarding a Palestinian state and try to keep a straight face. "Let us begin peace negotiations immediately without preconditions," says the comedian, and then proceeds to state the following preconditions: Jewish settlement construction in the West Bank, where Palestinians hope to build a homeland, must be allowed to continue; Jerusalem must be declared the capital of Israel; refugees must be denied the right of return; and last but not least, the new Palestinian state is to be demilitarized and denied its own airspace rights. Is it possible for us to ascertain what the Israeli prime minister was trying to accomplish by using those two words, "without preconditions"?

Well, let's try. What about setting more obstacles in the path of an already stymied peace process? Or leaving nothing to the Palestinians to negotiate about? Or putting the Palestinians in a situation where he looks like he offered something, and they said no? What is very clear is that Netanyahu rejects the two-state solution and is telling Obama and his crew to go to hell.

What is also rather funny is the Obama administration's response. "The Netanyahu government took a big step forward in acknowledging for the first time the need for a two-state solution," says a White House flunky. The mind reels. Do they really think we are that dumb? Does language mean anything, or is it just an excuse for blowing smoke? The administration's response makes Bill Clinton's question regarding the meaning of the word *is* sound Socratic.

I had the bad luck to run into Netanyahu one day and saw firsthand his *modus operandi*. It was about nine years ago, in New York, and I had gone to see a revival of *42nd Street* on Broadway with Gianni Agnelli, the late CEO of Fiat. Gianni had a restless na-

ture and would only sit through half a show. Naturally, he had procured the two best seats in the house, front and center. As the curtain was about to go up, an usher arrived waving her flashlight and asked us to move. Behind her waiting impatiently was the boorish Netanyahu and some tart who was not his wife. Gianni was ready to stand up when I pulled him back. I looked at the tickets and made sure we were sitting in the right seats. Then I gave the finger to the three of them and told them in no uncertain terms where they should go. The usher took umbrage, but the then-ex-prime minister of Israel recoiled. The show began without incident.

During the interval Gianni had had enough. As we got up to leave I saw the Israeli freeloader ready to pounce on our seats. So I bid Agnelli goodbye, told him the show was too good to miss, and remained in my seat. The one next to mine stayed unoccupied. End of the attempt by the bully-boy to take what was not his.

Which brings me to some good news. Israel's foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, a Moldovan thug who makes Netanyahu seem to possess plenipotentiary dignity by comparison, is using his access in Russia to suggest that Israel might look to Moscow for support and become less dependent on the United States. If true, it is the best news for Uncle Sam since Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown. Lieberman is the man who has gone on record saying all Palestinians should be ethnically cleansed to Jordan, and that Israeli Arabs should take an oath of loyalty to the Israeli state or lose their citizenship. He used to be a bouncer in a nightclub. Now he holds the office once held by Abba Eban. Unlike wine, Israel does not improve with age.

But the comedy goes on. Israel has been playing Uncle Sam like the proverbial fiddle from the start. The decision whether to build and how much



goes to the heart of the tensions between Obama's administration and that of the comedian Netanyahu. Or so says the *New York Times*. In actual terms, Israel has been illegally building since 1967, and more than 500,000 settlers are determined not to be evicted but to push further and deeper into the West Bank. With the singular exception of Bush 41, instead of addressing the root cause of Palestinian anguish—occupation, occupation, occupation—every U.S. president has focused almost entirely on the "terrorist" actions carried out by Palestinians against Israeli civilians.

O terrorism, what crimes are committed against thy name! Israel has violated every article of the Geneva Convention since 1967. Thousands killed, hundreds of thousands swearing revenge, and millions in an humanitarian crisis. Since her inception Israel has taken 78 percent of Palestine. If any other country in the world had been guilty of such behavior, the United States would have long ago labeled it a terrorist regime, and almost universal condemnation would have followed. Instead, because of the power of the Israeli Lobby in Washington, no American politician, and very few journalists, give anything but the Israeli view of events. Let's face it: The powerful Israeli lobby runs U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and if anyone believes that Obama and Rahm Emanuel are about to read the riot act to Netanyahu and his gang, he is invited to my annual lunch for Elvis Presley, who is alive and well, and sings some golden oldies for me and my guests. <

Decline and Fall

by Tom Piatak

"The lives, not only of men, but of commonwealths and the whole world, run not upon a helix that still enlargeth; but on a circle where, arriving at their meridian, they decline in obscurity, and fall under the horizon again."

—Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* I

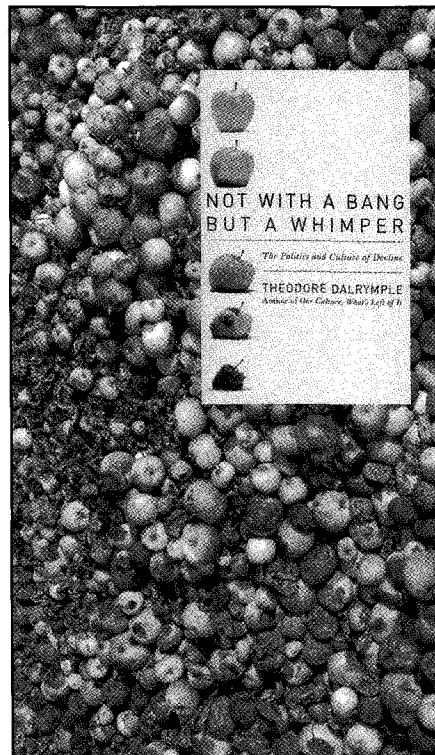
**Not With a Bang But a Whimper:
The Politics and Culture of Decline**
by Theodore Dalrymple
London: Monday Books;
368 pp., \$26.95



There are few books I have read in recent years that I can more heartily recommend to *Chronicles* readers than *Not With a Bang But a Whimper: The Politics and Culture of Decline*, the latest collection of essays by British physician and essayist Theodore Dalrymple (the pen name of Anthony Daniels). For many years, Dalrymple worked as a doctor in the Third World and the British penal system, where he came to disdain what liberalism had done to his country and made the journey to conservatism. Dalrymple brings his medical training to bear as he offers a grim diagnosis of the modern West, in general, and of his native Britain, in particular, a land Dalrymple left for France in 2006. But Dalrymple delivers his bad news in the best possible way, in clear, readable prose full of memorable phrases and sustained by deep and penetrating thought.

Dalrymple's targets are many and

Contributing editor Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.



Melanie Anderson

well chosen: Steven Pinker's reductionist critique of grammar, which he calls "characteristic of an intellectual climate in which the destruction of moral and social distinctions is proof of the very best intentions"; the "irredeemably adolescent" Voltaire; the plays of Henrik Ibsen, with their "elevation of emotion over principle, of inclination over duty, of rights over responsibilities, of ego over the claims of others, the impatience with boundaries and the promotion of the self as the measure of all things"; "the feverish vulgarity that for so many people in the modern world is the manifestation, prerequisite, and only meaning and value of freedom"; the new atheists and their "sloppiness and lack of

intellectual scruple," their "assumption of certainty where there is none," and their "adolescent shrillness and intolerance"; "an aggressive popular culture that glorifies egotistical impulsivity and denigrates self-control," including the rap music that "fills and empties the mind at the same time: fills it with debased notions and empties it of critical faculties"; multiculturalism, which rests on the "dishonest pretense . . . that all cultures are equal" and results in a "shared culture consisting of nothing but pop ephemera"; "the growth of the intellectual class whose livelihood depends on ceaseless carping," especially in "an era that uncritically criticize[s] all institutions"; the belief that "any difference in economic and social outcome between groups is the result of social injustice," a way of thinking that "can breed only festering embitterment"; an atmosphere in which "you can't fail as a minority: you can only be failed by others"; and the "almost totalitarian uniformity of the sayable, imposed informally by right-thinking people in the name of humanity." In sum, Dalrymple targets the leftism that grew in the West in the last century, whose stinking weeds have now all but overrun the garden of our civilization, leaving behind "the scores of millions who suffered and died in the twentieth century because of the

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
CHRONICLES/POLEMICS
928 N. MAIN ST.
ROCKFORD, IL 61103



SAVE A STAMP!
E-MAIL YOUR LETTER
TO THE EDITOR.

POLEMICS@CHRONICLESMAGAZINE.ORG

destruction of moral boundaries” and bequeathing to us “a world in which the only freedom is self-indulgence.”

Dalrymple also sees many signs of what Sam Francis dubbed anarcho-tyranny. Britain has the highest rate of crime in the West, even though “the typical Briton finds himself recorded by security cameras three hundred times a day,” and “one new criminal offense was created every day except Sunday for ten years” during Tony Blair’s residence at Downing Street. But these new laws seek to restrict the freedom of law-abiding Britons, not to crack down on violent criminals who, indeed, are given a free rein by the police. Crimes like shoplifting have been decriminalized, and violent felons are soon released from prison so they can rob and rape and kill again. British police increasingly focus their attention on those violating the strictures of political correctness, such as the schoolgirl who was charged for asking to be reassigned to a study group where someone spoke English rather than Urdu, or the Oxford student who was arrested for asking a mounted policeman, “Excuse me, do you realize your horse is gay?” By contrast, when Dalrymple’s wife reported youths setting fire to a garbage dumpster, the police asked, “What do you expect us to do about it?” In today’s Britain, the “police do not devote attention to most real crimes, in which detection is difficult and very uncertain of success.” (This point was

brought home in Danny Boyle’s delightful film *Millions*, in which a policeman tells residents of a suburb in the north of England that they should expect their homes to be robbed during Christmas, that they will never recover their property, and that the burglar will never be caught, but that they should call the police anyway so that they will be able to file an insurance claim.) And the British establishment is decidedly uninterested in hearing about this. A former parole officer, David Fraser, wrote *A Land Fit for Criminals*, in which he detailed the ways in which “liberal intellectuals and their bureaucratic allies have left no stone unturned to ensure that the law-abiding should be left as defenseless as possible against the predations of criminals.” Fraser’s book was turned down by 60 publishers, in a land that publishes 10,000 books per month. It did not become a best-seller until it was accepted by the 61st publisher, whose stepson had been murdered by a “drug-dealing Jamaican immigrant.” The murderer was not deported; he received an eight-year prison term, which means that he will be out in four or five years. (His defense attorney argued that the murderer had been a “victim of racial prejudice,” which was accepted as a mitigating factor.)

Anarcho-tyranny is not the only problem in modern Britain. Dalrymple presents Anthony Burgess’s *A Clockwork Orange* as “socially prophet-

ic” and sees aspects of Burgess’s dystopia in today’s Britain, where “adults now routinely look away as youngsters commit anti-social acts in public, for fear of being knifed if they do otherwise” and “aggressive young drunks ... congregate by the thousands in every British town or city on a Saturday night.” Higher up the social scale, Dalrymple sees reflections of the dark vision of the late British writer J.G. Ballard, a novelist “who first spotted that the bourgeoisie wanted to proletarianize itself without losing its economic privileges or political power.” Ballard’s work also suggests that “absent a transcendent purpose, material affluence is not sufficient—and may lead to boredom, perversity, and self-destruction.” The consequences of such empty affluence are profound:

The privatization of morality is so complete that no code of conduct is generally accepted, save that you should do what you can get away with; sufficient unto the day is the pleasure thereof. Nowhere in the civilized world has civilization gone so fast and so far into reverse as [in Britain].

Dalrymple also gives evidence that he is a true conservative, not a classical liberal. One of the few heroes in his book is Samuel Johnson, who knew that

most men, instead of reasoning from first principles on all occasions, need the aid of the accumulated wisdom of custom, precept, and prejudice most of the time if they are to live a moral life in reasonable harmony and happiness with one another.

In his discussion of Hayek’s *Road to Serfdom*, Dalrymple faces the fact that the social and cultural decline of Britain has continued apace during the economic liberalization that began with Margaret Thatcher. Indeed, although postwar Britain ignored Hayek until the Iron Lady came to power,

at no time could it remotely be

said that Britain was slipping down the totalitarian path. The real danger was far more insidious, and Hayek incompletely understood it. The destruction of the British character did not come from Nazi- or Soviet-style nationalization or central planning, as Hayek believed it would. For collectivism proved to be not nearly as incompatible with, or diametrically opposed to, a free, or free-ish, market as he had supposed.

Instead, the danger was foreseen by Hilaire Belloc in *The Servile State*: a society in which the means of production remain in private hands but where the state compensates for the vicissitudes of capitalism by a growing plethora of programs until “the people lose ‘that tradition . . . of freedom, and are most powerfully inclined to [the acceptance] of [their servile status] by the positive benefits it confers.’” Thus, the British have replaced their traditional inde-

pendence with

passivity, querulousness, or even . . . a sullen resentment that not enough has been or is being done for them. . . . Private property and consumerism coexist with collectivism, and freedom for many people now means little more than a choice among goods.

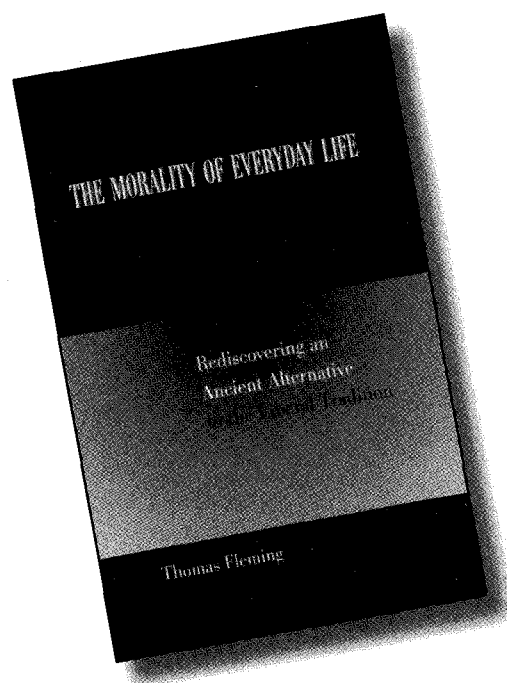
Although he is not a religious believer, Dalrymple also makes a conservative case against the new atheists, noting that “To regret religion is, in fact, to regret our civilization and its monuments, its achievements, and its legacy.” With Pascal, he believes that “The heart has its reasons that reason knows not of,” and Dalrymple states that the attempt “to find a way of life based entirely on reason . . . leads at best to Gradgrind and at worst to Stalin.” He observes that the new atheists, despite their professed beliefs, cannot help but use teleological language in their writings, since “Metaphysics is like nature: though

you throw it out with a pitchfork, it always returns,” and he concludes that their attempt to convince others that man is nothing more than a biological accident, acting out his evolutionary impulses in a cold, meaningless universe, is dangerous:

If you empty the world of purpose, make it one of brute fact alone, you empty it (for many people, at any rate) of reasons for gratitude, and a sense of gratitude is necessary for both happiness and decency.

Dalrymple remains too optimistic about the prospect of assimilating large numbers of non-Western immigrants, and he cannot quite bring himself to tie Britain’s secularization to her manifest decay. But these are quibbles. If the West is to recover from the many maladies Dalrymple so ably describes, part of the cure will be an acceptance of the unfashionable truths he tells in this remarkable collection of essays. 

NOW IN PAPERBACK!



The Morality of Everyday Life

Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition

by Thomas Fleming

“Writing much more accessibly and knowledgeably than most modern, professional philosophers, Fleming revivifies the body of thought with which civilization was created and without which it is disintegrating.”

—Ray Olson, Booklist

Softcover • \$24.95
(plus shipping and handling)
Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

- send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103
- make checks payable to The Rockford Institute
- call (800) 383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover
- purchase online at the webstore on ChroniclesMagazine.org

"The One"

by Clark Stooksbury

America's Half-Blood Prince: Barack Obama's "Story of Race and Inheritance"

by Steve Sailer

Washington, CT: VDare Foundation;
292 pp., \$29.95



Barack Obama has risen to the highest office in the land on a thin résumé—a pair of Ivy League degrees, some time spent as a “community organizer,” and short periods in the Illinois legislature and the U.S. Senate. And then there are the books. The President is the author of the best-selling *Audacity of Hope* (2006) and *Dreams of My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (1995). *Dreams* depicts a sensitive and intelligent, if somewhat self-absorbed and brooding, young man. Obama is famously the child of an African father (who abandoned him) and a white mother (who largely did so as well). As the subtitle of *Dreams of My Father* implies, race was at the forefront of Obama's dream. His struggle for identity was not aided by growing up with his white grandparents among the open racial attitudes in Hawaii, where, he writes, “we said what we pleased” and “sat at the front of the proverbial bus.” Reflecting on his atypical background, Obama writes,

Grow up in Compton and survival becomes a revolutionary act. You get to college and your family is still back there rooting for you . . . But I hadn't grown up in Compton, or Watts. I had nothing to escape from except my own inner doubt. I was more like the black students who had grown up in the suburbs, kids whose parents had already paid the price of escape.

This inner doubt apparently gnawed at the youthful Obama.

It is unlikely that more than a hand-

ful of people have studied Obama's writing more closely than Steve Sailer, a quantitatively minded journalist, blogger, and columnist for the immigration-oriented *VDare.com*, which published his book.

Writing in *The American Conservative* two years ago, Sailer compared Obama to Tiger Woods.

Although the biracial Obama is frequently lumped with the multiracial golfer Tiger Woods as evidence of the socially healing power of interracial marriage, their attitudes are quite different. Woods turned down Nike's suggestion that because African-American celebrities are so popular today, he should identify himself solely as black. He didn't want to disown his mother. Woods instead calls himself black and Thai, or, at times, “Caulbinasian,” [*sic*; Woods uses the term *Cablina-sian*] in tribute to his Caucasian, black, American Indian, and Asian ancestors.

In *Half-Blood Prince* Sailer continues the comparison, writing that “white Obama zealots are prone to assume that Obama is the Tiger Woods of politics: as the postracial product of a happy mixed race family, he must be the anti-Jesse Jackson.” Before reading Sailer on the subject, that is exactly how I imagined Obama.

While Sailer has contributed some valuable insights into Obama's background, *America's Half-Blood Prince* is deeply flawed as a book. It appears to be cobbled together from columns and blog posts, which is evident in endnotes that are more accurately described as hyperlinks. Some of the links are actual source notes; but there are dozens, if not hundreds, of links to *Amazon.com* and convoluted URLs aimed at Google Books and Wikipedia entries for obscure events and figures. The citations would have been far more useful if about half were eliminated and many others reconfigured as traditional notes.

Sailer also repeats and contradicts

himself, especially regarding Obama's literary talents. *Half-Blood Prince* at one point refers to Obama as a “superb prose stylist” but later describes *Dreams* as “quite tedious and hard to finish.” Sailer praises the “sheer intricacy of the prose style,” yet refers to the “sonorous flow of [Obama's] prose”; later, he faults the author for “premeditated obscurantism,” while lauding him as a “self-consciously gifted writer.” I read *Dreams of My Father* without developing any such complex opinion of Obama's writing style. The book was reasonably well written, but I certainly had no problem setting it down. I still don't know whether Sailer thinks Obama is a good writer.

Half-Blood Prince does illuminate Obama's character, at least as the President portrays himself in *Dreams*. Obama became obsessed at an early age with race and with the feeling that he wasn't “black enough,” whatever that might mean. (This is a topic that might make journalists uncomfortable, but Sailer ventures where journalists fear to tread.) The major political consequence of this obsession, Sailer argues, was Obama's decades-long relationship with the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., who enjoyed his 15 minutes of infamy during the 2008 Democratic primary campaign. Brief clips of sermons in which Wright called for God to “damn America” and suggested that the attacks of September 11 were an example of America's chickens coming home to roost were posted on YouTube. Sailer notes that Obama didn't choose Wright's church haphazardly:

It must be especially exasperating to Wright that few in the white press have noticed that a very bright young man named Barack Obama fastidiously chose Wright, out of all the black ministers Obama had met during his community organizer years, precisely because Obama was impressed with Wright's intellect and agreed with his politics.

Sailer devotes his final chapter, written before Election Day 2008, to pondering the likelihood of an Obama

presidency. He dissects at length Barack Obama's views on affirmative action, a subject that has become supremely relevant owing to the President's recent nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. Sailer suggests that Obama's interest in supporting his racial "team" may have faded, and that Obama may have evolved beyond the persona he projected in *Dreams of My Father*. Perhaps ambition overwhelmed his youthful race obsession, or he may simply have grown up. (The Sotomayor nomination may serve as evidence to the contrary.) And Sailer argues that Obama will reserve the revelation of his true self for a second term:

In Obama, ambition and caution are yoked. Becoming president is not his ultimate objective. Becoming a two-term president is. Republican Richard Nixon's first Administration was one of the most liberal in American history. There were hints at the beginning of his second term, before Watergate washed every bit of policy coherence away, that Nixon, having safely won re-election, intended to move toward his innate conservatism. That analogy suggests that a second Obama administration might more truly reflect the real Obama.

This is a dubious prediction. Certainly Obama has noticed that recent second presidential terms have been mired in scandal. If he is to accomplish anything, he needs to act while he has the votes in Congress and the support of the public. He cannot count on having those in four years. Unless arrogance has already overwhelmed his intelligence (a possibility, to be sure), the President knows this. In the case of those who succumb to arrogance, reality has a way of intruding on their best-laid plans. Not even a "half-blood prince," once hailed by Oprah as "The One," is exempt from this law.

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.

Unnatural Causes

by Wayne Allensworth

The Private Patient

by P.D. James

New York: Alfred A. Knopf;
352 pp., \$25.95



"For me," wrote P.D. James in her "fragment of autobiography," *Time To Be in Earnest*, "one of the fascinations of detective fiction is the exploration of character under the revealing trauma of murder inquiry." Murder "is the unique crime, the only one for which we can never make reparation to the victim." As a writer who concentrates on character development, James is drawn to the mystery genre precisely because a death by unnatural causes (*Unnatural Causes* is the title of one of her earlier novels featuring the Scotland Yard detective and poet Adam Dalgliesh) "destroys privacy, both of the living and of the dead." Murder "forces us to confront who we are and what we are capable of being." Small wonder, then, that murder "has fascinated writers and readers since Cain murdered Abel." And for more than 46 years, since the publication of her debut novel, *Cover Her Face*, P.D. James has ably used the mystery genre to explore human nature through the characters in her books.

At 88 James has given us one of her strongest efforts, writing with depth and clarity, as well as with an elegance seldom seen in an era of postmodern scribbling. She has also broken new ground, showing readers that advanced age does not necessarily mean decreased skills or intellectual curiosity. Reading James' later books, one is reminded that age was once associated with increased gravity and wisdom.

In *The Private Patient*, James remains superficially true to form as a traditional teller of mystery stories in a distinctive English style. The setting is Cheverell Manor in the Dorset countryside, a temporary retreat for the patients of a well-known plastic surgeon, George Chandler-Powell. Investigative jour-

nalist Rhoda Gradwyn, facially disfigured at a young age, a disfigurement that has also left her emotionally and spiritually scarred, arrives as Chandler-Powell's latest "private patient." As expected in a James novel, even the minor characters are fully drawn. Each has a story that makes him interesting to the reader: greed, hopes, dreams, revenge, and love drive them all to play their parts in the story. Gradwyn herself, following a watershed event in her life, has decided to have her disfigurement corrected by Chandler-Powell, who wonders why the successful journalist has waited so long to have the procedure done. At an initial meeting with the plastic surgeon, Gradwyn reflects on the scarring that has driven her most of her life:

There was a moment in which, not touching the scar, he scrutinized it in silence. Then he switched off the light and sat again behind the desk. His eyes on the file before him, he said, "How long ago was this done?"

She was struck by the phrasing of the question. "Thirty-four years ago."

"How did it happen?"

She said, "Is that a necessary question?"

"Not unless it was self-inflicted. I assume it wasn't."

"No, it wasn't self-inflicted."

"And you have waited thirty-four years to do something about it. Why now, Miss Gradwyn?"

There was a pause; then she said, "Because I no longer have need of it."

In this way, James sets up the story, with many of its characters scarred in some way, some of them seeking redemption as best they can in a post-Christian society. This is a theme James has built on from the beginning of her literary career. Dalgliesh is the son of an Anglican priest, a man with an interest in church architecture who sometimes touches on spiritual questions in his pursuit of a knowable truth in a world that seems increasingly chaotic. He lost his wife in child-

birth years before, and the introspective poet has decided to remarry as he approaches the end of his career.

Gradwyn is murdered by strangulation following her operation, and Dalglish's Scotland Yard team, which is assigned to especially sensitive or difficult homicides, uses the conventions of detective fiction (examining the body, interrogating those living at the manor, theorizing with regard to the murder) to advance the story. In the manor, small dramas unfold as the cast of characters is confronted with "who we are and what we are capable of being." At stake are the fate of the manor and clinic, the relationships between the various characters, an inheritance, and the success of Dalglish and his team in their attempt to restore order against the disorderly background of the murder, which is soon followed by another.

James frequently transposes modern institutions and structures (Scotland Yard, a nuclear power station) with symbols of the past (an abbey, a church), stressing the continuity of human traits and contrasting the increasing uncertainty of the 21st century with earlier periods marked by tradition, custom, and religious faith and ceremony. In *The Private Patient*, she further expresses her distress and pessimism in the face of a world that no longer seems to make sense, in which the forces of disorder, so long held at bay by prophets, priests, and the likes of Adam Dalglish, seem to be winning out. Gradwyn, for instance, while attending the marriage of her long-widowed mother, makes the following observations:

She thought, I don't belong here, I'm not happy with them, nor they with me. Their embarrassed mutual politeness can't bridge the gap between us. But this is where I came from, these are my people . . . that amorphous, unregarded group who fought the country's wars, paid their taxes, clung to what remained of their traditions. They had lived to see their simple patriotism derided, their morality despised, their savings devalued. They caused no trouble. Millions of pounds of

public money wasn't regularly siphoned into their neighbourhoods in the hope of bribing, cajoling or coercing them into civic virtue. If they protested that their cities had become alien, their children taught in over-crowded schools where 90 per cent of the children spoke no English, they were lectured about the cardinal sin of racism by those more expensively and comfortably circumstanced.

This story does not end with all the loose ends tied up, in the tradition of the English mystery. Though the case is officially closed, Dalglish does not believe that the full truth has been uncovered, that he has truly restored order. In a world without set boundaries, he is confronted with people who must set their own, and who wonder whether the truth will set them free:

Dalglish said, "I accept that, given the confession, nothing more can reasonably be done. But I don't like unfinished business. I needed to know if I was right . . . Now I know the truth in so far as it can be known . . . Or is that too arrogant a claim?"

"To know the truth and to understand it? Yes, with respect, Commander, I think it is. An arrogance and, perhaps, an impertinence . . ."

The book includes a note of hope, however faint, for the character pondering a heinous crime amid the ruins:

She thought, The world is a beautiful and terrible place. Deeds of horror are committed every minute and in the end those we love die. If the screams of all earth's living creatures were one scream of pain, surely it would shake the stars. But we have love. It may seem a frail defence against the horrors of the world, but we must hold fast and believe in it, for it is all we have.

Corresponding editor Wayne Allensworth is the author of *The Russian Question*.

A Measured But Practical Hope

by Lloyd E. Gross

The Tyranny of Liberalism: Understanding and Overcoming Administered Freedom, Inquisitorial Tolerance, and Equality by Command

by James Kalb

Wilmington, DE: ISI Books; 330 pp., \$28.00



If man is the measure, it cannot be right to tell him what to do. We cannot be forced to be free or ordered to be equal. Neither theoretical refinements nor practical compromises can resolve such basic contradictions or keep them from leading to unprincipled and irrational conduct that eventually proves self-destructive.

Savor that felicitous prose. It is a sample of what awaits those who read James Kalb's *The Tyranny of Liberalism*, 289 pages of text followed by ample documentation and references. Kalb says what many of us have not been quite able to articulate. He identifies the cracks in the foundation on which modern liberal sensibilities rest, cracks which all of us knew had to be there, but found difficult to spot.

Kalb loves language. There is a poignancy to his lamentation of its pre-empting by the Newspeak of the New World Order. His description of how liberals use the terms *toleration*, *inclusion*, and *rationality* can liberate even one educated in post-1960's public schools, unless those institutions were successful in destroying his ability to think critically.

Kalb also loves tradition. He correctly assesses liberalism as a rejection of tradition, and with it the unwritten principles, many of which are based on religion, that allow people to live in the real world. Kalb accepts the Christian doctrine of Original Sin,

which alone explains the limitations one must expect of human behavior. He also accepts the concept of natural law. He does not say that his understanding of natural law is Thomistic, but he definitely rejects the “nature” spoken of by philosophical materialists. The Declaration of Independence speaks of “nature and nature’s God.” Kalb uses similar language. I see little difference between Kalb’s concept of natural law and the Scholastic one.

The book is divided into two parts, which come down to problem and solution. Kalb summarizes the history of Western civilization, tracing the rejection of real knowledge and the rise of technocracy, bureaucracy, and the herd mentality that prevails among us now. He offers a very pessimistic analysis of our current situation, showing the difficulties in any attempt to resurrect real freedom and genuine intellectual endeavor. In the second half of his book, he offers some hope. Kalb understands that liberalism has no choice but to permit its own destruction if it remains true to its principles. And he offers us some practical advice for now, concerning homeschooling, using the internet, and generally staying below the radar of the bureaucracy.

Kalb is a Christian. He concludes that faith is the necessary item that will maintain tradition until it can reclaim its rightful place. “Our acts can make sense and be fruitful only as part of an order for good founded in the nature of things.” If those last four words remind you of a book by Marion Montgomery, be assured that Kalb has the same intellectual independence and would assert that objective knowledge is real and attainable, even as Montgomery would. Rejoice that another voice has been added to the movement to reclaim civilization.

The Rev. Lloyd E. Gross is pastor emeritus of Christ Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Cleveland, Ohio.



FROM CHRONICLES PRESS

Immigration and the American Future

edited by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

14 HARD-HITTING CHAPTERS

Wayne Allensworth • James Bissett • David A. Hartman • Peter Brimelow • Edwin S. Rubenstein • James A. Bernsen and the Lone Star Foundation • Roger D. McGrath • Steven Greenhut • Thomas Fleming • Gregory McNamee • Alberto Carosa • Guido Vignelli • Chilton Williamson, Jr.

“Can immigration be expected to change America for better, or for worse? If we accept at face value President George W. Bush’s claim that terrorism represents the gravest threat to America, as indeed it may, then we must ask ourselves whether terrorism, by itself, is capable either of obliterating the United States as—say—Rome eradicated Carthage from the map of North Africa, or of destroying it by effectively replacing the existing nation on what historically has been American soil with another and different nation. If the answer is “No,” then we must agree that the terrorist threat is in fact a subset of the immigration one—and that **mass immigration is a greater threat to the survival of our country than any terrorist campaign possibly could be.** Which, it seems to me, is saying a very great deal about the dangers posed to the United States by mass immigration.”

—From the Foreword, by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

**Softcover • 307 pages
\$29.95 (includes s/h)**

**To order, call (800) 383-0680
or visit www.ChroniclesMagazine.org**

Looking Backward

Hard cases make bad law, and since 2002 the exposure of some ugly criminal cases has stirred legislators in several states to contemplate dreadful legal innovations. However far removed these crimes may appear from regular mainstream American life, the legal principles involved threaten to wreak havoc in the coming decades.

As all the world knows, the Roman Catholic Church has for some years faced a problem from clergy sexual abuse. In some cases, adult priests had sex with teenage boys and young adults, while others—true pedophiles—focused their attention on small children. For the sake of argument, let us concede that perhaps three or four percent of priests over the past 60 years were involved in some such misconduct. How should we as a society respond to this? In most cases, the statute of limitations has long expired on such acts of molestation, and that restriction has infuriated media and legislators. In 2002, the state of California passed what is known as a lookback law in an effort to remedy the perceived wrong. For a period of one year, a so-called civil window, victims could launch civil lawsuits in cases that would otherwise have expired, however long ago the abuse occurred. Delaware followed with a two-year window, and, as in California, the new opportunity provoked a torrent of suits.

From one perspective, such windows are a wonderful idea. Imagine, for instance, a hypothetical pedophile priest who was ordained in 1955 and who spent the next 25 years molesting literally hundreds of children, before retiring comfortably. Is it not simple justice that he, finally, should face the consequences of his acts? And, by the same token, so should those Church authorities who winked at his acts, subjecting him to trivial or inconsequential forms of discipline, while ignoring the needs of victims.

But the reality is not nearly that simple. Yes, I can point to cases of monstrous serial pedophiles, but they are wildly atypical in the records of clerical sexual misconduct. In the vast majority of cases, sexual misbehavior was nothing so flagrant, and the evidence for it is often slim to nonexistent. How on earth can anyone defend a case concerning an alleged incident of sexual impropriety that occurred in 1970? Over time, memories fade, witnesses die or become hard to trace, evidence become scarcer, and the odds of conducting a fair trial decline precipitously. The dangers of exhuming ancient allegations in a civil case are all the greater because plaintiffs have such an overwhelming financial interest in establishing their claims.

Also, we may today know that sexual abuse is an extraordinarily dangerous form of victimization, but earlier generations did not share that opinion. Professional and expert opinions about the severity and frequency of sexual abuse have fluctuated dramatically over time, and concern reached an historic low between 1955 and 1975, the exact time that many of the alleged acts of abuse occurred. Of course, diocesan authorities reacted to such cases then with much less urgency than they would in 2009. Lookback laws thus demand that institutions be judged according to the standards and attitudes prevailing today, but for actions that occurred 30 or 50 years in the past. Apples are to be judged as to how far they live up to the criteria of oranges.

This critique goes far beyond the specific problem of child-abuse cases. In other matters, too, the seriousness that a given society places on a partic-



ular act may change swiftly and radically. An act that a society regards as fairly minor at one time may 30 years later come to be seen as so appalling as to be unforgivable, and *vice versa*. Over time, indeed, some kinds of conduct move entirely outside the scope of criminal law. In the 1950's and 60's, consensual adult homosexual behavior constituted a very serious crime in most jurisdictions, although attitudes were radically transformed in later years. But even when acts have remained criminal, the stigma that attached to them has changed to an amazing degree: Just think of the attitudes prevailing toward drug use in the 1970's compared with today's.

Can any of us say with confidence how the laws and mores of our society will change between now and 2040? I may today be a law-abiding person, observing laws and social standards as best I understand them; but unknown to me, I may be engaging in behaviors that, in the retrospect of 30 years, could come to seem irresponsible or cruel, and deserving of stern sanctions. Will future courts be trying people on charges that, in 2009, they campaigned against "gay marriage" or denied the reality of global warming? By no sane or reasonable standard should I be judged by the standards of a future generation. Lookback laws represent a looming catastrophe for the U.S. legal system. ☐

Thomas Fleming • Clyde Wilson • Paul Craig Roberts
Pat Buchanan • Justin Raimondo • William Murchison

To read the latest from these authors, visit www.ChroniclesMagazine.org

The End of Manufacturing

The unemployment rate in Illinois broke double-digits in May to hit a seasonally adjusted 10.1 percent, a 26-year high. Of course, double-digit unemployment rates are nothing new here in Rockford; we have been above ten percent for the better part (so to speak) of a year now, hitting a high of 13.5 percent in March before gaining a little ground in April, then slipping back to 13.4 percent in May. And the last time Illinois' unemployment rate was this high, Rockford's was roughly double.

As has been the case for the past decade, if not the past three-and-a-half decades, manufacturing has been the hardest hit. It has been several months since manufacturing fell to less than ten percent of the U.S. economy, and while a properly managed implosion of a building sends out minimal shock waves, the implosion of the U.S. auto industry has been anything but properly managed. While NAFTA and outsourcing gave the Big Three incentives to reduce their reliance on domestic parts suppliers, many small manufacturers throughout the Midwest still receive business from the domestic auto industry, and many others depend on business from those who do.

In other words, 2009 is going to be a painful year for Midwestern cities like Rockford whose economies are still heavily dependent on manufacturing. Yet Bob Trojan, president of Rockford Linear Actuation and board member of the Rockford Area Chamber of Commerce, thinks the worst may be over. On his Manufacturing 2.0 blog on the website of the *Rockford Register Star*, Bob argues that the economy is pulling out of recession, in large part because of a turnaround in manufacturing, and predicts that economic statistics will prove him right within a few months.

Bob knows his business far better than I do as a mere observer, though I would not hesitate to take the bet if he were to offer one. But one of

Bob's reasons for believing that we have reached the recession's trough sparked some thoughts about the future of manufacturing. Bob sees an increase in spending on advertising, which, he notes, tends to track consumer spending. Of course, it can also stimulate consumer spending, or at least redirect it.

And one of the ways that advertising has successfully redirected consumer spending in the United States for several decades now is from saving to purchase a more expensive, higher-quality item in the future to buying a less expensive, lower-quality item that will satisfy one's desires *right now*. This move toward lower-cost but more frequent purchases has had economic effects that partly explain the current weaknesses in the U.S. economy—for instance, a lower (even negative) personal savings rate, which reduces the capital available for long-term investment, and a greater reliance on consumer credit, which helped fuel the housing bubble through second mortgages and home-equity lines.

Indeed, lower prices are a powerful means of encouraging impulse buying over savings, as the empire that Sam Walton built attests. But one cannot lower prices and maintain profit margins without lowering costs. Sometimes, economies of scale and new production processes allow a company to lower costs while maintaining quality; more often, the savings come from cutting corners and making a product that is “good enough.”

And so the cycle continues—and it is even presented as one of the glories of our “free-enterprise system.” Several years ago, a prominent paleolibertarian scoffed that those who would pay \$70 for an American-made blender that would last for decades over a \$10 Chinese-made blender were depriving themselves of the frequent advances in “blender technology.” The “planned obsolescence” (read: shod-



dy construction) of the cheaper product thus becomes a virtue.

But is this what manufacturing should be? One needn't dive into etymology and point out that *manufacturing*, at its root, is more akin to the English *handiwork* or *handicraft* than it is to modern mechanized mass production. Yet the decline in quality and the “consumer preference” for disposable goods cannot be blamed (at least not entirely) on the techniques of modern manufacturing. Those techniques may make it easier to produce shoddy products, but they do not make it inevitable. We do, by making the choice to satisfy our desires now, rather than to save for the future.

The first men whom Henry Ford paid five dollars per day put together automobiles that lasted far longer than anything made by Detroit today—or even by Toyota or Nissan or Honda. Rather than use their pay to “stimulate the economy,” many of them saved and paid cash for their homes, which they furnished with mass-produced yet high-quality furniture made in Rockford or in Grand Rapids, Michigan. That furniture commands high prices in antiques stores today.

If Bob Trojan is right and we have not seen the end of manufacturing in the United States, then we need to start asking ourselves a question that few have entertained: What is the end—that is, the purpose—of manufacturing? There is no future in competing with China on price. There may be one, however, in producing the kinds of goods that we can hand down to our children, and to our children's children. ◊

Letter From England

by Derek Turner

A Tsunami of Towers



Here, you can see almost forever. It is a great green plain bounded by low wolds to the west and the North Sea to the east, by the River Humber to the north and the shining mudflats of the Wash to the south. It is a landscape for seven-league boots and ten-league thoughts, as the sun falls behind the small, blued summits and shadows rush away eastward.

It is a desirable, debatable territory maintained and menaced by countless capillaries—creeks, inlets, havens, estuaries, outfalls, deeps, lakes, meres, ponds, bogs, swamps, waters, rivers, streams, becks, brooks, ditches, drains, dykes, sykes, cuts, sluices, holes, lades, gowts, and gulls—which may at any time rise up and overtop the embankments, tops, rises, sills, bridges, lanes, ways, droves, pullovers, and gaps. At the lowest tides can be seen the stumps of trees among which animals and men hunted and were hunted 10,000 years ago, and the more recent ribs of ships left behind on seal-haunted sandbanks—and there are the semiremembered, semifabulous stories of Great Storms, important ports drowned, wharves washed away, straightened waterways torn out of alignment, masonry dredged up by nets, kingly landing places laid low, abbeys annihilated, church bells heard tolling underwater.

The ancestral antediluvian experience and the ever-present apprehension of dangers and drownings inevitably to come are just aspects of a complicated and continuing saga, because the high tides and inundations have also deposited a dirty gold of salts-rich silt attractive to animals and cereals, as well as to the keen-faced men who for millennia have strewn seeds into the welcoming clay and re-

leased long-fleeced sheep to snuffle and snaffle for rich facefuls of grass and clover across the pastures and cotes, fitties and fields, nooks, gallops, and rides.

Prehistoric pedestrians, Roman soldiers, Saxon merchants, Anglian anchorites, Danish overlords, motte-and-bailey building Normans, harassed monarchs, tax collectors and customs men, journeymen, tinkers, Dutch engineers, countermarching Cavaliers and Parliamentarians, itinerant Protestant preachers, horse-traders, navvies, farm laborers, and tourists escaping modernity have passed this way, and looked down in idle curiosity or admiration at this great sweep of England's edge—at this contour map without contours, this child's dream landscape of big fields lined with hedges, strung-out villages, ships curving in through sea-haze towards Hull and Immingham, narrow twisting roads, coverts and holts, fluorescent rape, imperial linseed, glittering water, old houses of plum-red bricks fashioned out of the earth on which they stand, and, raised above everything else, the squat, sometimes slightly out of true towers of medieval churches in cowparsley choked churchyards in parishes whose euphonious names go back to otherwise obliterated Danish landowners and even the Celts.

The Ordnance Survey maps, with their Gothic-lettered sites of deserted villages, monastic foundations, earthworks, and cultivation terraces, can read like the score of a thus-far unwritten North Country Symphony—Aby, Addlethorpe, Alford, Austin Fen, Gayton-le-Marsh, Grainthorpe, Grimoldby, Humberston, Marshchapel, Orby, Saltfleetby, Skegness, Theddlethorpe, Wainfleet, Willoughby. It is a windborne music audible to those who have discovered some of this place's secrets, who have stood there, in that lane, and peered through a brake of hawthorn at hares boxing, weasels playing, the sycamore-studded Norman mound, the toppling 18th-century manor with the Venetian window and wrecked cars lit-

tered across the lawn.

The sparse, staccato spires—Perpendicular monumentality at Louth and Decorated stateliness at South Somercotes—and the elegantly Italianate dock tower at Grimsby (up crumbling iron ladders, and out finally into jacket-plucking wind and an arc of creeping ships and cloud-chased immensity) merely accentuate the fabulous flatness of this ocean of green leading to the ocean of blue beyond.

It is what Joseph Conrad would have called “an insignificant foothold on the earth . . . ignored between the hills and the sea” (*Tales of Unrest*). It is a place for silence and thinking, and listening breathlessly to the geese as they fly heavily over, their calls numinous with a sense of illimitable space, countries unseen, seas unnavigated, strands untraversed, marshes unexplored. It is also preeminently a place to bring joyful Jack Russells down expectant bosky paths and across morasses populated by marsh harriers, owls, bitterns, rooks, dragonflies, hoverflies, bumblebees, water spiders, hares, badgers, weasels, natterjack toads, newts, birds-foot trefoil, lords and ladies, cuckoo pint, rose bay willowherb, great mullein, Aaron's Rod, a roe deer standing on its hind legs feeding from a tree, an angler-fish skeleton marooned hundreds of yards above the tideline, a washed-up 19th-century ship's door, lichen-encrusted fortifications thrown up hastily in 1914 to pin down Wilhelmine shock troopers who never came. It is a place of subtle, unconventional beauty and recondite charms for a small number of cognoscenti—a place of escape, a place that has escaped.

Until now. For here, pricking once-unsullied horizons, rising dizzily up and up above the churches, there suddenly are gigantic white aluminium and PVC pillars, atop which sit three enormous sweeping scythes, harvesting the high winds as tiny earthbound men have for so many centuries tilled the prostrate land so far below.

The wind turbines are finally bring-

ing industry and the city to the Lincolnshire Marsh, one of England's last "empty" spaces—foreshortening vistas, filling fields of vast vision with flickering metronomic movement, kicking contemptuously away the pretensions of the churches, dragging unwilling minds away from Pan towards the plasma TVs of Birmingham, turning open skies into Sky Sports and green places into Green Parties.

They are grandiose toys, as falsely friendly as the giant rubber balls that bounced across Portmeirion to capture and choke *The Prisoner*—avuncular stelæ pinning down, like fading beetles to cardboard, the formerly untrammelled vistas loved by Tennyson, adding a plastic surreality to the ghost-filled east coast that always, as W.G. Sebald observed, "stands for lost causes."

That melancholy, reactionary sea-board may now itself be lost because of Whitehall's self-imposed frantic rush to obtain 15 percent of national energy needs from "sustainable" sources by 2020—to which end they are subsidizing electricity producers to the tune of £485 million per annum and centralizing planning powers to overrule those peasants who are presumptuous enough to want to protect their areas. Our ever-increasing, ever more

gadget-dependent population every year requires more and more megawatts to keep its Blackberries, iPhones, laptops, palmtops, satnavs, and netbooks powered up and Chinese factories ticking over. And our government, in its lamentably lackadaisical way, instead of gently slowing population growth, altering our assumptions, and challenging our consumption, has opted to throw the people the fell meats they demand even though they know deep down that the diet is making them sick.

For the government it is business as usual, stoking the same old engine in the same old way: gorging on gigawatt gobbets to keep the lights on always in our police stations, courts, prisons, sex shops, sex clinics, needle exchanges, all-night bars, floodlit bungalows and executive homes, old people's homes, sports stadia, expanded airports, supermarkets, shopping malls, job centers, business parks, closed factories, regulatory offices, equality commissions, bailed-out banks, and government departments—and to make brilliant the motorways that carry ever-thickening traffic to ever-shrinking destinations.

Sixteen turbines loom up above the Earls' Bridge at Mablethorpe, the scene of an apocryphal duel in which two

earls died, that sad-bungalowed seaside resort made yet meaner; twenty at Conisholme, showing the tiny tree-surrounded church with its Anglo-Saxon crucifix its true importance; two at Croft, whose church contains one of England's earliest brasses; and fifty-two offshore—all visible for over 20 miles from any angle. And more are planned—many more offshore, six at Langham, twenty at Orby, two at Tetney, and eight in the Wolds at Baumby, marching like H.G. Wells' Martians across supposedly protected spaces—powering not just houses but also a subsidiary demand for pylons, substations, access roads, fencing, and security lights. And these are merely the planning applications that have been lodged; there are other landowners pondering the trade-off between money now and beauty tomorrow—an all-too-easy decision for some, yet a decision others will probably live to regret.

The Lincolnshire Marsh has already paid exorbitant Danegeld to the god of global warming and more than fulfilled its regional targets on green energy, losing much more in attractiveness than it has so far gained in protection or even gratitude. Although turbines are springing up all



Derek Turner

over the country, guilt-reducing magic bullets aimed at a complex problem, many neighboring areas have so far fought off applications—local politicians and planners there being perhaps longer-sighted or just wlier.

In January 2008, Dale Vince, the founder of the turbine operator Ecotricity, said, “We need every bit of green energy we can get and those who say otherwise are simply wrong and selfish.” In March, Energy Secretary Ed Miliband upped the political stakes, saying that opposing wind turbines should be “as socially unacceptable as not wearing a seat belt.” Such comments are simultaneously setting the agenda and going with the moral flow, with turbine skeptics now being routinely accused of selfishness, narrow-mindedness, ultraconservatism, and even “Duelling Banjos attitudes” (according to a letter attacking this writer in the Lincolnshire press). Naturally, the finger-pointers rarely offer their own backyards for the turbines, but are content for others to bear the burden of their bad conscience. (Similarly, Ted Kennedy is protesting a scheme to erect turbines that would be visible from his Cape Cod home.)

These “Greens,” for whom the countryside is a “resource” rather than a place of beauty, are in bed with an electricity industry now able to obtain positive headlines while simultaneously securing impressive profits. According to Jonathan Leake of the *Sunday Times*, writing in January 2008,

Lavish subsidies and high electricity prices have turned Britain’s onshore wind farms into an extraordinary moneyspinner, with a single turbine capable of generating £500,000 of pure profit per year. According to new industry figures, a typical 2 megawatt (2MW) turbine can now generate power worth £200,000 on the wholesale markets—plus another £300,000 of subsidy from taxpayers. Since such turbines cost around £2m to build and last for 20 or more years, it means they can pay for themselves in just 4-5 years and

then produce nothing but profit.

Nonrenewable fuels also face a climate-change levy, from which renewable producers are exempted. Meanwhile, electricity bills have increased by approximately 15 percent in the last year. One would like to ask Mr. Vince who is really being the most “selfish.”

Yet all this investment, and all of Britain’s 211 operational windfarms (totaling 2,434 turbines, according to British Wind Energy Association figures), still only power around 1.9 million homes—and even this quotient needs to have conventional plants to back it up because wind power notoriously cannot be stored. (A system is being developed to solve this problem, but sadly it requires an old mine to house the necessary machinery.)

It is less obvious why local planners and politicians are often so compliant. Local councils do have limited and diminishing powers, but one might have thought they would have been putting up more of a fight for the area and the people they are elected to represent. There certainly seems to be too little understanding that Whitehall is not a friend, but a necessary evil that must be outwitted.

A deeper reason affecting this part of the country specifically may be the conventional prejudice against flat landscapes as being somehow “boring”—a prejudice that has survived since earliest times, when marshes were places of disease and banishment, metaphors for marginalization, attracting saints like Guthlac, who built a small cell in the reeds at Crowland, in defiance of the “wilde menne” who plagued him, from which grew a great but now diminished abbey and today’s tiny town with its unique three-way bridge crowned by a weathered Christ the King.

It is simply too much trouble for these presently allied groups to encourage other renewable energy methods (solar power, tidal power, or biomass), or to outfox London bean-counters trying to offload their headaches, or to court unpopularity by asking people to change their habits. They have their “easy answer,” and

they are going to stick to it, just as the town planners of the 1960’s stuck resolutely to their tower blocks. In 20 years, when everyone will want to know who allowed all these turbines to be built, the monomaniacs or idlers responsible will be retired or retiring, encrusted with habit and self-justification and OBEs, weighed down with pension schemes and presentation clocks—Lilliputian facsimiles of the national politicians given peerages as a reward for lifetimes devoted to decline management.

Against the combined weight of administrative inertia and Green fervor are scattered individuals or small, fragmented groups short of money and time (there are some 140 antiturbine campaigns in the United Kingdom), trying to galvanize local politicians and members of the public to fight for such life-enhancing intangibles as character, beauty, heritage, and quality of life. Even the recession has not yet stopped the march of the pillars and pylons—with Gordon Brown, like Barack Obama, trying to use investment in the green-energy sector as a means of kickstarting the economy. Including the Lincolnshire turbines enumerated above, a further 846 turbines are presently being erected, another 1,837 have been given planning consent, and planning permission is being sought for 3,244 more (British Wind Energy Association figures).

There are heartening counterdevelopments: increased emphasis on offshore rather than onshore turbines, greater professionalism and coordination of antiturbine groups, a new ten-meter-high turbine that is more efficient and less obtrusive, and developments in solar, tidal, and biomass technology that will soon make these commercially viable. The danger is that these longer-term solutions will arrive too late—and the lovely, lonely, taken-for-granted Lincolnshire Marsh will have drowned under a tsunami of towers before most people have even noticed it exists and is worthy of defense.

Derek Turner is the editor of The Quarterly Review.



Contrasts

by Catharine Savage Brosman

How the Historical Novel Has Changed!

Should one read Hervey Allen or Anne Rice? Why should the question be asked at all? Why might a discriminating reader today even think of picking up either Hervey Allen's massive best-seller of 1933, *Anthony Adverse*, or *The Feast of All Saints* (1979) by Anne Rice, a hugely popular contemporary author? (Both are still available through major booksellers.) A literary face-off here between the two historical novels, chosen out of scores of works that might invite adversarial (if not saintly) confrontation, is instructive. They are not without resemblances—an illegitimate hero, questions of race and status (including slavery), and a New Orleans setting for Rice's novel and part of *Anthony Adverse*. Each illustrates the genre differently.

Allen (1889-1949), from Pittsburgh, was graduated (according to the *Columbia Encyclopedia*) from the university there, then fought in the Great War. *Toward the Flame: A Memoir of World War I* records his experiences. He taught English in Charleston, South Carolina, and collaborated with DuBose Heyward on a poetry collection, *Carolina Chansons* (1922). He is best known for his biography of Poe, *Israfel* (1926). According to 1933 interviews in New York newspapers, he spent five years composing *Anthony Adverse*. He later published other verse and fiction.

Anthony Adverse has broad chronological and geographical scope; the plot is elaborate, the characters numerous. For proper understanding and appreciation, readers need some acquaintance with art, architecture, languages, politics, and history (for instance, the early Napoleonic period). To be sure, this is a strength, not a weakness. Gruesome acts occur. While enthusiasts of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* might be attracted to Allen's work, they would soon find it different—characterized by thoughtfulness and moral sensitivity, and without appeal to sen-

sationalist tastes.

The term *picaresque novel*, used in reviews, is inappropriate. *Anthony Adverse* is not just a string of episodes involving a clever, rascally hero who must live by his wits. Although Anthony trades in slaves around 1800—a man of his time—he is concerned with morality and generally conducts himself honorably. Nor are other characters cardboard figures who simply advance the plot. Napoleon, convincingly portrayed, plays a not-inconsiderable role. The writing is often poetic (no minimalism or Hemingwayesque sparseness here), the vocabulary rich, the syntax good. A few errors can be overlooked. Exotic settings add their strangeness to chronological distance, but they are not exploited excessively. Natural features are described well and human relationships with nature explored, notably when Anthony is a boy and, much later, when he lives by himself in the American wilderness, then is captured by Indians. The dominant metaphor is that of the tree, so like man in its birth from darkness, vertical growth, flourishing, and inevitable end. Despite violence, good taste is not assaulted. If you don't know what that means, don't ask; I won't tell.

In addition to its concern with justice, which Rice's novel shares, *Anthony Adverse* asks numerous other "great questions." How can a man understand himself without knowing where he came from? Anthony, an orphan, never learns his parents' identity or even nationality. (In this respect he is worse off than Rice's Marcel Ste-Marie, a quadroon, who knows his mulatto mother and white father.) How should one respond to evil (particularly, the malevolence displayed by Anthony's mother's husband, who goes so far as to condemn him to near-certain death in a leprosarium)? How should one deal, in a class society, with one's inferiors? How can one live a Christian life, short

Anthony Adverse

by Hervey Allen

of following Brother François, who returns good for evil and is crucified by primitive African fanatics? How can a man redeem his errors? What is genuine love of woman? Are intimations of spiritual reality mere illusions?

Anne Rice is a manufacturer of best-sellers. Born in New Orleans in 1941, she was called Howard Allen (her father's name) O'Brien; her mother found that "interesting." The child adopted the name Anne. Her mother died of alcoholism in 1955. Anne attended Catholic schools in New Orleans until the family moved to Richardson, Texas. Her husband of four decades, the late Stan Rice, a visual artist and poet, was a high-school classmate there. They went to California; Anne ultimately got a master's degree in creative writing from San Francisco State, where Stan taught that subject. In 1989, they left California for New Orleans. Her first novel, *Interview With a Vampire*, appeared in 1973. Subsequent titles, including such words as *vampire*, *witches*, *devil*, *damned*, and *mummy*, suggest exploitation of public credulity and ghoulishness. Her books have sold more than 100 million copies. Three films were drawn from her work, and a 2001 miniseries was based on *The Feast of All Saints*. She herself wrote the text of a vampire musical, starring Elton John. In 1998 she returned to her childhood Catholicism.

There is more. Under the pen names Anne Rampling and A.N. Roquelaure, Rice composed what one listing terms "classic erotica," including *Exit to Eden* (1985), now in paperback. One commentator described her pornography as "explicit sado-masochistic erotica." "Her characters' sexuality is fluid, often displaying homoerotic feelings." She said that she looked for bisexuality in her characters. Her son Christopher, also a novelist, is a homosexual. *The*

Feast of All Saints depicts homoerotic relationships, but without details.

For some *Chronicles* readers, a *prima facie* case against her work has been made. Should such personal and publishing facts really bear, however, on literary appreciation and judgment? Many fine authors have been shady, callous, or perverted—even moral monsters. Perhaps Hervey Allen had a skeleton or two in his closet. (Information on him is scant.) At some chronological remove, moral factors are usually discounted. But that may be because genuine literary merit, confirmed by generations, offsets what is otherwise offensive, or time has eroded our sense of the author's moral deformities. Perhaps such indulgence in judgment, or "the condescension of posterity," is not justified. Or we realize that the author of risqué material wished not to encourage perversion but only to *épater le bourgeois* (amaze middle-class readers), though that cannot be said of the Marquis de Sade. What about current writers, our contemporaries, sometimes our neighbors? (In New Orleans I lived next door to one of Anne Rice's three Garden District houses.) Certainly, I should not want to enrich and encourage present-day pornographers by buying obscene books, no matter what their fame or purported literary qualities. The Rice novel in question here and one other came into my hands by chance, *gratis*.

In the present case, there is little need to weigh *ad hominem* judgments against high literary value; Rice's 570-page novel, while readable, with a generally plausible story, is mediocre. What would one expect, given her sales figures? Fiction that draws 100 million readers is unlikely to be fine writing. Common readers used to appreciate better fare. Think of Victor Hugo's fame, of Mark Twain's. In the late 19th century, Robert Maudslay, a sheepman from Ozona, Texas, recorded in his diary the contents of the library in the two-room stone house he shared with his brother: a complete Shakespeare, a complete Scott, and the *Illustrated London News* going back to 1840. The basic literary education that enabled many

ordinary people to value good writing prevailed, broadly speaking, well into the 20th century. Allen's novel sold very widely and was reprinted, but it is closer kin to Scott's and Victor Hugo's than to Rice's. In the 1960's and 70's, an expanding but indiscriminating population, schooled by trashy English departments and popular journalism in relativism, and exposed too little to elevated tone and contents in literature, generally expected, and got, sloppy writing, superficial depictions, sensational plots, and otherwise worthless, if not offensive, subject matter, instead of high truth and high seriousness.

Rice does demonstrate basic skill in plotting, in a narrowly defined fictional framework. The narrative carries readers along; one wishes to know what happens, just as, say, following a news report on an (allegedly) abusive "boyfriend," we want to know whether he has been apprehended. But that's just curiosity; to fulfill it takes no genius. Rice's only notable achievement is to depict sympathetically the lives and difficulties of French-speaking Free People of Color in New Orleans in the 1840's. Unfortunately, she calls them *gens de couleur libre*, rather than *libres*—making the color, not the people, free. Ah well, what does one expect from her and from Simon & Schuster, also the publishers of historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, for whom accuracy (at least in terms of crediting sources) was once shown to be unimportant? The Free Blacks or Black Creoles, with roots in the 18th century, remain a significant element of the city today. They populate several neighborhoods, churches, and schools—including Xavier University; businessmen, noted poets, craftsmen, professional people, and numerous members of the political class come from this segment of the population. Using invented characters and minor historical figures, Rice recreates its peculiar situation before 1865. Free in some respects (they owned property, including slaves), often cultured, sending their sons to France for school, the Black Creoles nevertheless faced restrictions in dealings with whites and, in response, developed customs such

as *plaçage*. Whether Rice's interest in them was out of true appreciation or, rather, a desire to milk the topic for exotic value, thumb her nose at white New Orleans society, or profit from current multicultural fashion is unclear. Questions of justice that arise suggest her sympathy with the class.

Rice's expository style (everyone has a style, even inept students) is lackluster, characterized by basic grammar and diction errors, comma splices, missing commas, sentence fragments, lack of parallelism, dangling phrases, and other improprieties in syntax. (No proper copyediting, obviously.) The portrayal of the French Quarter relies on local color details and terms such as *banquette* (sidewalk). Much of the depiction is hyperbolic, and emotions are conveyed without shading and subtlety. Though minor, a few puzzles in the exposition are annoying. There are pages that I'd consider soft porn (not that I pretend to authority in the matter, even with my grounding in French literature). Readers interested in Free Blacks might enjoy and profit more from George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes* and *Old Creole Days*, and Lafcadio Hearn's *Creole Sketches*.

When the historical novel arose in the early 19th century, it appealed to readers' feelings and their thirst for the past—particularly the Middle Ages—and for flamboyant dramas in exotic settings. But it was also truth-bearing, even inspiring, as understanding, ultimately judgment, of behavior and events arose from the recounting and shaping of fact and imaginative additions. Well into the 20th century, good historical novels by modern authors helped depict and interpret the past. Though the genre lost ground to "true novels," cheap romances, and "suburban" fiction (*à la* Cheever and Updike), fine examples, especially concerning the American South and West (Wallace Stegner's *Angle of Repose*, for instance), were still produced after 1950. Rice's *Feast* is not, however, one of them. Of course, in a dentist's office, you'd read almost anything, right? But choose *Anthony Adverse* for broad design, beautiful prose, multilayered truth, and astounding goodness. ◊

COMMONWEAL

American Mojo

by Douglas Wilson

*"America was, is, and—we pray—
will continue to be the place where
more than anyplace else, dreams
actually do come true"*

—William J. Bennett

The key phrase to notice in William Bennett's statement is "more than anyplace else." In recent years, a number of well-meaning patriots have taken up the theme of what is called American exceptionalism. This is in part a reaction to those among us who managed to get onto the Lord High Executioner's "little list" a century or so before they were even born—I refer of course to the "idiot who praises, with enthusiastic tone, all centuries but this, and every country but his own." Blame America First is a reflex action on the left, and it appears that some have grown really tired of it and think that Praise America First is a good alternative. But when we simply react to one dumb thing, it more often than not results in just another dumb thing.

Sometimes the sentiment is comparatively restrained, as with Bennett, and sometimes it isn't. Giving a new meaning to the phrase "taking the cake," David Gelernter recently wrote a book describing Americanism as "the fourth great western religion":

"America" is one of the most beautiful religious conceptions mankind has ever known. It is sublimely humane, built on strong confidence in humanity's ability to make life better . . . The ideas that emerge in a blaze of light center on liberty, equality, and democracy for all mankind.

Now these are not the ravings of an

overheated and provincial Fourth of July speaker located in a small Midwest town a century or more ago. Gelernter teaches at Yale, writes for *The Weekly Standard*, and in every respect appears to be clothed and in his right mind. Where is all of this coming from?

We know that we are in the grip of this peculiar temptation when we think that no one else in the history of the world could possibly have experienced it—although, in fact, pretty much everyone has. But we think that Nebuchadnezzar, when he was looking with dangerous satisfaction at everything he had built, could not have been experiencing the same legitimate pride that we do because what he had built was in no way American. We look down on pride in others, it turns out, not because it is a deadly sin for everybody, but because in their case it appears they are making a factual error.

But chauvinism is as ordinary as dirt, and we are as susceptible as anybody else. C.S. Lewis noted the problem in *That Hideous Strength*:

"You're right, Sir," [Dimple] said with a smile. "I was forgetting what you have warned me always to remember. This haunting is no peculiarity of ours. Every people has its own haunter. There's no special privilege for England—no nonsense about a chosen nation. We speak about Logres because it is our haunting, the one we know about."

So in one respect this idea of American exceptionalism is a gigantic folly, but in another it is an understandable mishandling of two things. The first is that as nations rise and fall, and as fortunes wax and wane, it is usually the case that one place is a better place to live than another. To state as a matter of dogma that every place must be at any given point in time "just as good as" any other is egalitarianism, pure and simple. Some, to head off the fol-

lies of jingoism, have resorted to that kind of egalitarianism, but the problem is that the follies of egalitarianism then perpetuate in their turn the follies of the next round of jingoism. Since America is clearly a better place to live than, say, North Korea, the stage is set for the exceptionalism mistake. At any given time, it is raining in one place and not in another, and most of us know enough to come in out of the rain. But if we start to assume that "sunshine here and rain there" is a force of history or a religious ideal, we have forgotten the importance of time and history, and the fluctuations that occur in the course of history. Things change, as it turns out, and they change according to predictable patterns. Sir John Glubb once noted that nations and empires have life spans, just like people do. But when they are on top of their game, they always forget that they do.

But there is a second reason the mistake of exceptionalism is understandable, and this has to do with a paradox resident in our founding and which is (still) found in the structure of our institutions. The American founding represented something that really was exceptional—that exceptional thing being that the Founding Fathers knew that Americans were just like everybody else. The Constitution presupposes that Americans are just as greedy and grasping as the rest of the world's citizens, and so we needed to adjust our firewalls accordingly. But in recent years, the national-greatness riff has touted this American exceptionalism as though we were unique creatures in the world—which, sadly, means that we have become like every other powerful nation that has ever existed. With our most recent round of chatter on our unique status in history, we now appear to have joined the herd.

"National greatness" neocons have argued strongly for this American exceptionalism. In their view, America is the last, best hope of the world, as the subtitle of William Bennett's two-vol-

ume work puts it. To this kind of overstatement, it is sometimes tempting to respond with a curt, "No, it isn't," and be done with the discussion. But to do this misses something important: At the founding of our federal government, something exceptional really was going on.

Consider these well-known words of James Madison from *Federalist* 51. Such a sentiment could be multiplied from numerous other sources—our entire form of government presupposes it. And the modern cheerleaders of things American appear to have forgotten it.

It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.

Put another way, our form of government assumes constancy of human nature, and does not rest on the promise of a unique American nature. The structure of American government was unique because the founders knew that the raw material that we were going to have to work with was exactly the same. Now that we have come to believe that the raw material is unique, our form of government is growing monotonously like every other despotism that has ever preened itself in front of a mirror. At the beginning of *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy says that all happy families are alike, and that every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. We might take the liberty of making a similar observation here. Every healthy nation is like ev-

ery other healthy nation, content to be "like the others." But every diseased polis has a thousand reasons for believing in its own uniqueness, and the crowning irony is that if you bother to work through the list, those reasons have a real monotony to them.

Our founders, when they crafted a form of government to oblige the governors to control themselves, were placing Americans under these constraints. Why? Because when it came to these issues, Americans were as little to be trusted with unrestricted power as anybody else. When Lord Acton said that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, he did not add, "except when dealing with Americans."

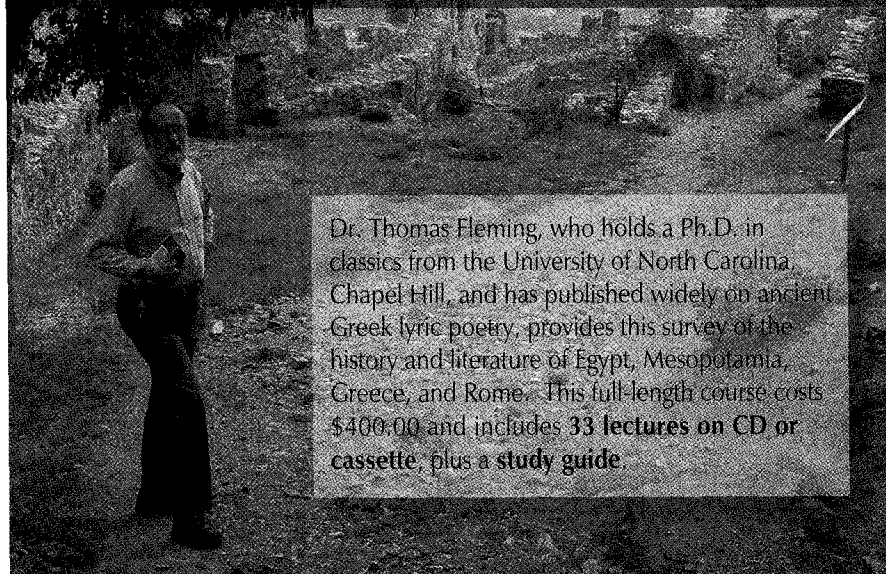
In *The Lord of the Rings*, that marvelous tale about the rejection of unrestricted power, Gandalf rejects the ring of power, as does Elrond and Galadriel. Frodo resists the lure of that power for most of his torturous journey. The means to defeat all their

foes had fallen into their hands, and the entire trilogy is about their resolve to throw that means away. The fellowship of the ring was unique, because they knew they were not unique. They were no more to be trusted with this kind of thing than Sauron was. But even among the good guys, there was a strong pull to believe that everything would be different in "this one instance." America today is Boromir; the nobility still present in the failure does not keep it from being a failure.

So we need to remember two basic things: how ordinary and pedestrian national hubris is, and how extraordinary national humility is. You can get nationalistic hubris off the rack at Kmart. Our Constitution presupposes that Americans are no more to be trusted with unbounded power than George III was to be trusted with it. The Bill of Rights loops restriction after restriction over the heads of Americans in power. The Tenth Amendment was not designed to keep the

33 RECORDED LECTURES PLUS STUDY GUIDE

History and Literature of the Ancient World



Dr. Thomas Fleming, who holds a Ph.D. in classics from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and has published widely on ancient Greek lyric poetry, provides this survey of the history and literature of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome. This full-length course costs \$400.00 and includes 33 lectures on CD or cassette, plus a study guide.

To order, call (800) 383-0680 or visit www.ChroniclesMagazine.org

Russian czars at bay, and the founders were not anticipating the rise of communism on the other side of the world. That is not what they were guarding against.

But even this important point must not be taken woodenly or simplistically. Ronald Reagan's use of the Lord's phrase "city on a hill" was taken from John Winthrop, and so there certainly was some form of self-aware exceptionalism from the beginning. But it is important to note the differences between a tempered Calvinistic optimism that understood the constant need to "stay under" in order for God to continue to bless, and the unbridled Pelagian optimism that finally came into its heretical own with the archangel Woodrow, as Mencken once called him. It is possible for founders actually to understand how real exceptionalism actually works. Those who build successfully do understand. Those who inherit, and who wreck what they inherit, do not.

Kipling understood this principle—"lest we forget, lest we forget"—and now that the empire he was admonishing has forgotten precisely what he urged them not to, with the attendant consequences of becoming one with Nineveh and Tyre, it appears to be our turn to forget the gods of the copy-book headings.

There is a vast difference between recognizing that things are going our way for the moment, which is simply an enjoyment of American mojo, and the assumption that such temporary advantages are representative of a transcendent and shimmering reality. The former is a creaturely blessing; the latter is hellish. This distinction is not a trivial point, for as our Lord once put it (laboring as He did under the disadvantage of not being American), he who exalts himself will be humbled.

Douglas Wilson is pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho, and senior fellow of theology at New St. Andrews College. Collision, a documentary chronicling his debates with Christopher Hitchens, is scheduled for release in 2009.

DISCRIMINATION

Who's Insane?

by Evan McLaren

A piece appeared recently in my local newspaper by one Anthony C. Infanti, professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. He wrote in support of a pending state antidiscrimination bill that would ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and "gender" identity.

There's no urgency in attacking his position or his argument. Infanti's piece is unremarkable in light of overall trends and attitudes toward sex, in general, and exotic sexual behavior, in particular. Wherever these trends lead, we are going to get there. In a borrowed phrase, fuming buys nothing.

Still, right-thinking people are not going to take Professor Infanti's words at face value. He presents a wholly economic rationale for antidiscrimination law. Excluding people means excluding potential business and revenue. If we include everyone, we accrue the economic benefits.

Does that make sense, as far as it goes? Perhaps, if one is willing to make of two or three statistics a portrait of our entire economic situation, and the way out of it. Eventually, though, the very logic runs out, since judgments ultimately have to be made about inclusion and exclusion, and people have to be placed on different footings based on their identities and roles in society. If you simply say no one should be excluded from full membership in any area of life, you end up losing the ability to say what citizenship and life are about, except that they seem to be things we can reconfigure to suit our individual preferences and attitudes.

That's pretty thin gruel conceptually, and it's even worse as a practical way of dealing with things. If we accept such valorization of individual choice as a standard, we end up rejecting anything that appears to limit that choice in any way. That means turning our backs on what the sociologist Will Herberg called "the funded

wisdom of the past"—those inherited customs, habits, and attitudes that inform our approach to the world.

Not all of our past attitudes are to be invoked as things worth restoring; such is impossible, anyway, since differing attitudes often contradict each other. But at some level we should be surprised to find that justice and basic decency now require us to replace our inherited public understandings with a single self-contained principle of equality that is to override all other considerations. That was not the Founding Fathers' original intention, and it was never our peoples' purpose.

Now, though, we are subject to the cult of mindless expertise, demanding with totalitarian aggression and metaphysical certitude that we greet the onrushing exotica of the age as natural, normal, uncontroversial, healthy, wonderful, and beautiful, and to hell with you if you hesitate to agree! Chaos and confusion are widespread and palpable, especially when it comes to sex, and another nondiscrimination law is not going to help us make better sense of ourselves and our situation.

That's quite a bleak assessment, I admit, but I don't mean to be a crank or a downer. Our leadership is aggressively unreflective and self-serving, and overall trends are bad and likely to get worse. But pessimism is not hopelessness. The message here is merely that the noise coming from our respectable media and academic authorities is on balance silly and decivilizing and not to be listened to. The role of the editorialist is to reassure: You who make sense of things in ways that jibe less with fashionable standards and more with the traditional prejudices (yes, there's that word!) of Western civilization are not backward or bigoted. Instead, you may be part of the last trace of collective sanity our civilization has left.

Evan McLaren is a graduate of Kenyon College and a contributor to TakiMag.com.



What a Drag

Some reviewers have hailed *Drag Me to Hell* as an hilariously ghoulish comedy. I can't think why. Oddly enough, it takes calculating discipline to make a comedy genuinely hilarious, and that is what's singularly missing from *Drag*, director Sam Raimi's return to his horror roots, following his *Spider-Man* successes.

Raimi began in the 1980's by making such stylish trash as *The Evil Dead* trilogy. Better was to come. *Darkman* (1990) displayed far more visual grace than Tim Burton's often flat-footed *Batman*, and at a fraction of the cost. Then in 1998 Raimi directed *A Simple Plan*, a rare film adaptation that improves upon the novel from which it is drawn. Raimi muted the Grand Guignol aspect of Scott Smith's narrative to focus on its Cain-and-Abel struggle, dramatizing how greed can drive otherwise unassuming citizens murderously bonkers.

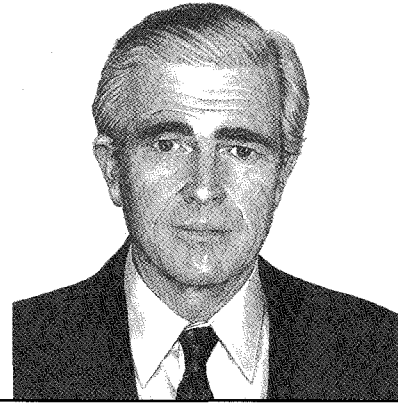
The constant in Raimi's films has been his imaginative tact. Although horror has often been his *métier*, he's generally been able to draw a line between entertainingly scaring and grossly disgusting his audience. It's this line that he breaches so thoroughly in *Drag*. Take the several scenes in which a gypsy hag hocks up gobs of green mucus onto the chubby cheeks of a terrified *ingénue*. One snot serving would have been quite enough for me, thank you.

How did it come to pass that the film's pretty heroine suffered such besnotting? Therein lies the tale. Her name is Christine (Alison Lohman), an ambitious young woman who has set her cap for promotion at her bank. Her manager, however, has doubts. Is she aggressive enough for the assistant manager's position? And then there's that wily Asian employee vying for the job. (Raimi has Chinese-Filipino actor Reggie Lee play him as a smarmy, scheming go-getter, an endearing stereotype sure to unnerve the

politically correct.)

Soon after her boss tells her of his doubts, Christine gets her chance to prove she can be as ruthless as her equal-opportunity competitor. Mrs. Ganush (Lorna Raver), a ragged gypsy woman, comes to her desk pleading in broken English for a third extension on her defaulting mortgage. Christine instinctively wants to help the poor woman, but she fears that if she does, she will throw away her chance for the promotion. Reluctantly summoning her inner Darwinian, she rejects the woman's plea, and the humiliated gypsy hurls a curse at her. As security guards haul the raving Mrs. Ganush from the bank, Christine hears the bank manager purr satanically over her shoulder, "You handled that just right, you know." Christine smiles wanly.

She discovers just how wrong her boss was when she finds Mrs. Ganush waiting in the parking garage to attack her. During the ensuing battle, the old woman manages to rip a button from her coat. She needs it to complete her curse. Later that evening things begin to go bump in the night as an evil spirit known as Lamia (not Keats' serpentine beauty, but a charmless goat-footed demon) torments Christine, slamming doors and windows and knocking the girl thoroughly about. Then a swarm of cockroaches rushes from her mouth. At work she has a geyser-like nosebleed, soaking her boss red. "Did any of the blood get in my mouth?" he cries in an edifying show of all-American self-interest. A spiritualist explains that Lamia will continue in this fashion for three days and then drag Christine to hell. To prevent this, she must retrieve the cursed button and give it to someone else who will then be dragged hellward in her stead. That's when we learn that Christine's boss was actually correct all along. She is simply not ruthless enough. Although she tries



Drag Me to Hell

Produced by Buckaroo Entertainment

Directed by Sam Raimi

Screenplay by Sam and Ivan Raimi

Distributed by Universal Pictures

to give the button away, she cannot bring herself to pass the curse on to someone else, not even to the scurrilous Asian. And so Christine becomes increasingly desperate as the plot hurtles to its climax.

Rather than scaring me, the spectacle of a young woman battered, besieged, and besnotted stirred my dormant sense of chivalry. I felt no inclination to laugh at this helpless young lady's travail. She needed someone to rescue her, but no one seemed up to the task, certainly not her wimpy boyfriend, played by Justin Long, the actor who incarnates modish reasonableness in those Macintosh advertisements. His character is much too enlightened to acknowledge Christine's dark demon, let alone defend her from it. She needed someone much more elementally masculine to face the terror she let loose. Was this possibly Raimi's point? That in a world stripped of archaic chivalry, a world in which women are pressured to be as go-getting as men, the better instincts of both sexes have atrophied? If so, I must applaud his integrity. He's put audience-appeal second to his theme of chivalry banished from a gender-neutral world. If this is not his point, then I suppose we will have to await his next *Spider-Man* outing. Peter Parker is nothing if not chivalrous. ©

The Trouble With Russia

The Russian government has established a presidential commission charged with countering “attempts to harm Russian interests by falsifying history.” The history it refers to is that of the 20th century, in which domestic and international crimes committed by the former Soviet Union played a salient and notorious role. The Kremlin insists that the sacrifices made by the Soviet Union during World War II have been insufficiently appreciated by her former allies in that conflict. “Human-rights advocates” will surely contend that President Medvedev is attempting to rewrite history by whitewashing it. Since the fall of the Third Reich, one German government after another has abased its people by ventriloquistic self-professions of guilt, while subjecting them to a profusion of legislation criminalizing free speech, and even free thought. No doubt the former Soviets could profit by collective acts of *mea culpa* in respect of their own unsavory history. Only they have never done so, because such has never been demanded of them. Which perhaps is one reason why the Russian state has been behaving as it has since Vladimir Putin came to power.

Anticommunists have argued for better than six decades that, heinous as Hitler’s crimes were, Stalin’s were as great—or worse, if one judges such matters on a quantitative scale. Certainly, Stalin killed millions more human beings in the course of his career than his satanic rival managed to eliminate. But the international left would hear none of it. In the leftist cosmology, the Third Reich reinvented evil by raising to it a dimension that had never before been attained by man. As the wickedness of Nazi Germany was wholly unprecedented, so is it unrealizable in the future. The carnage the Nazis accomplished was unquantifiable because it amounted to a metaphysical deed, an act of pure evil, demoni-

cally planned and executed. Stalin, by contrast, began his work with the best of intentions. His Soviet workers’ paradise was corrupted and finally destroyed by historical accident and historical obstinacy, abetted by the machinations of international capitalists and, in the end, the perfidious Beast of the Apocalypse in Berlin. No decent human being could tolerate a comparison between Hitler and Stalin, or the German and the Soviet people they led. Suspecting perhaps that vigor and tenacity might not always be equal to the job, leftists have made a point of supplementing those qualities with an unrelenting and deftly coordinated campaign of political bullying and cultural intimidation, sustained over a period of better than half a century, to prevent such a comparison from ever being made, or to ensure its total rout before the deafening derision of the enlightened classes. Liberals cannot condemn communism without placing themselves in the uncomfortable intellectual and political position of having to explain how liberalism differs from the communism represented by Marx and Lenin and Stalin and Khrushchev and Brezhnev and Gorbachev and Putin (a former head of the KGB)—how Alger Hiss, that is, differed from Joseph Stalin—and so most liberals refuse to do so.

One might be forgiven for supposing that, with the relegation of the Soviet Union to history, and such iconic figures of the Cold War debate as Hiss and William F. Buckley, Jr., dead and buried, the decades-long campaign by the left to save the reputation of the Soviet Union from a fatal coupling with the memory of the Third Reich has neither moral or historical significance, nor political relevance. And yet, it is not so. The newspaper headlines, day after day, prove that it is not.

The Soviet Union has gotten away with mass murder. No Russian government since 1991 has apologized



for its Soviet predecessors’ actions in the 20th century or suggested that the Soviet Union was anything other than the primary victim of World War II and the Cold War. The West has adopted a deliberate policy of never insisting that the Russians grovel before their past, as the Germans have done before theirs, and are still doing. And so today they feel unconstrained in behaving like aggressive ghetto adolescents, running in gangs at home and threatening their neighbors in the more or less peaceable republics adjacent to their homeland, while carefully challenging the nations of Europe, and the United States.

But the newly revived Mother Russia is not a communist state, though she remains an authoritarian one. Russia’s thoroughly corrupt, plutocratic society contains no trace element of anything that could possibly be described as progressive idealism. The left no longer has any reason to defend and indulge Russia, while the Kremlin’s drive for regional hegemony and its resistance to NATO and the European Union give the neoconservative right precisely the sort of opening toward aggression for which it is always searching. Accordingly, President George W. Bush was encouraged to indulge the temptation to overplay his hand in his dealings with the Kremlin in the present circumstances, which amount to a new Cold War conducted at reduced levels of hostility and in which the traditional nationalist rivalries that partly drove the old Cold War have moved front and center in the absence of the old ideological differences.

Putin's Russia presents a delicate and highly complex diplomatic challenge to the United States and Europe. But delicate and complex diplomatic instincts did not distinguish President Bush and his foreign-policy advisors, just as sledgehammers and crowbars do not identify a praying mantis. The Russians have never been more than a half-civilized people, and the American people are rapidly declining toward that level. Bush's Russia policy, including his withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2001, his scheme to plant nuclear missiles in the Czech Republic, the expansion of NATO to include former Soviet republics, Washington's troublemaking in Russia's Near Abroad, and the President's military and diplomatic support for President Saakashvili of Georgia, was hopelessly crass, at once insulting and threatening to Russian interests and Russian pride. Yet the blame is scarcely all on the American side. Medvedev's and Putin's manipulation of the gas flow to Europe and their aggressive behavior toward the Central Asian republics are equally threatening and irresponsible, and recent comments directed toward the former Soviet states in Eastern Europe even more so.

The continuing antagonism between Russia and the United States since the fall of the Soviet Union makes two things very clear. The first is that the Cold War was never about communism *versus* capitalism solely, perhaps not even chiefly. The second is that a change of government on the part of an adversary nation is not necessarily sufficient to transform its relationship with an historical enemy. Whether or not it is an exaggeration to say that Americans still hate Russians, and Russians continue to hate Americans, Washington persists in despising the Kremlin, and the Kremlin in loathing Washington. The explanation for the extended hostility is partly institutional. The present Russian government is heavily composed of men who doubtless still believe in the communist system and the Soviet Empire and regard the collapse of both as a personal, as well as an ideological, hu-

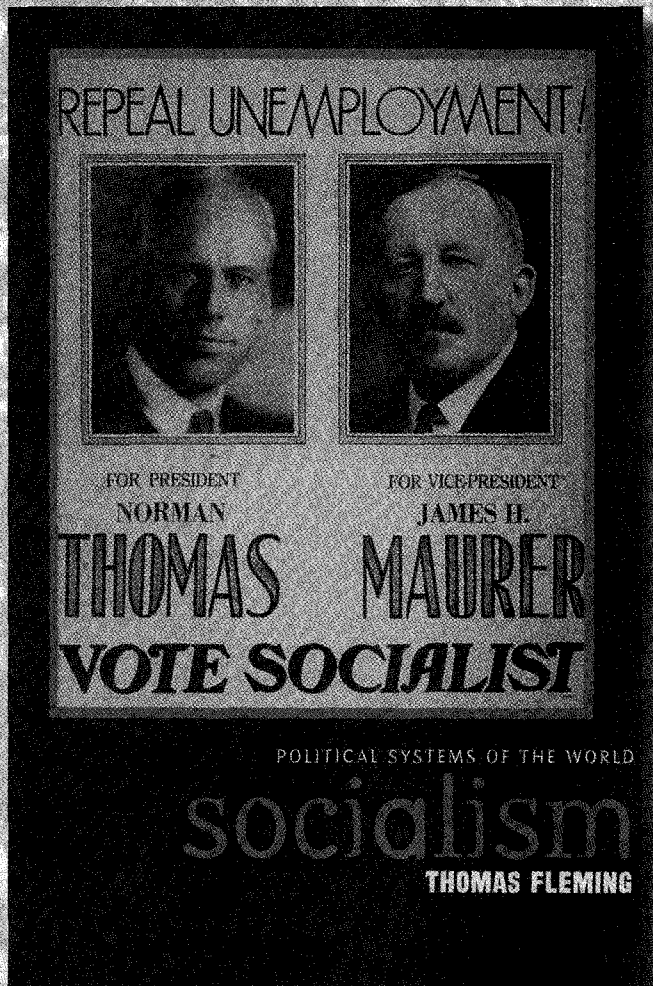
miliation. Their secret desire is for revenge. And George W. Bush gave them their opening here. He did it by rashly and arrogantly launching two wars of aggression in the teeth of opposed international opinion; by suggesting that he had no respect for the other nations of the world; finally, by failing to win those wars, which have become placards of the decline of American power and influence. Naturally, the Kremlin, smelling the blood of the Last Remaining Superpower, has been emboldened to challenge the United States on several fronts, exploiting her failures and probing her weakness. For the present, it hardly matters that Russia is unlikely ever to rise to the level of superpower again—that her plummeting population, her endemic social and historic political dysfunction, her economic contradictions, and the vulnerability of her southeastern border to demographic invasion from China appear to condemn her to the status of a third-rate nation in the not-so-distant future. Today, she remains the second most powerful nation in the world in terms of her nuclear capacity, and that is sufficient. For the foreseeable future, the United States should continue to treat Russia as her most long-standing diplomatic challenge and her most dangerous rival abroad. The question for the Obama administration is, How ought the United States to confront Russia in the short run, and where?

Not in the Near Abroad, where American military and political self-insertion is comparable to the Kremlin agitating Mexico, Central America, and Cuba against Washington. Time will tell whether President Obama will keep military advisors in Georgia and whether his administration will continue otherwise to meddle in Russia's backyard. But there is no hope for his plan to expand the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, from which we will eventually be compelled to stage a humiliating withdrawal. Iraq will collapse in bloody chaos as soon as the President completes the promised military withdrawal there, even if he leaves behind 50,000 troops, as he is now promising to do. The deterio-

rating situation in Pakistan is likewise unwinnable, undeterminable, and uncontrollable by Washington, which is certain to see its most critical hopes dashed in yet another Third World catastrophe. While Obama is forced to bend to military disaster and the fiscal reality of a bankrupt treasury, Russia will be watching—with a Cheshire grin across its wide collective face. Its Near Abroad will at last be safe from the Yankee soldiers, on the run from Asia, where they will eventually be as rare as the Bengal tiger.

Eastern Europe is another story. NATO now counts among its members Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, and several other countries that once were part of the Soviet Union. Admitting them was a colossal blunder on the part of NATO's Western signatories, but what's done is done. These new NATO countries must now be defended by their allies in a crisis. The Kremlin has alarmed them with vague threats aimed at its Western Near Abroad. An *Anschluss* is improbable and unlikely, almost unthinkable, yet the Russians need to be discouraged from this sort of behavior.

A campaign to counter Medvedev's revisionist historical project might be one answer. The Western world has been overeducated these past 60 years in the atrocities perpetrated by one of the two principal villains of the 20th century. Of the heinous deeds committed by the other of them, they have been taught all too little. If Mr. Medvedev believes the history of his country has been "falsified," then it is up to the West to insist that, on the contrary, it has been grossly *underemphasized* by Russia's former allies as well as by herself. Those Eastern European states that were forcibly annexed by the Soviet Union have very immediate memories of what it was like to live under a Soviet regime that was no less brutal and inhuman than the Nazi one. They have every reason to tremble when Moscow casts a red eye their way again. It is the duty, as well as in the interest, of Western Europe and the United States to make the Soviet record as plain to the world as the Nazi one has long been. ◊



Socialism

by Thomas Fleming

FROM THE *POLITICAL SYSTEMS OF THE WORLD* SERIES BY MARSHALL CAVENDISH BENCHMARK

For as many teachers, students, politicians, and pundits who ready to explain the thought of Engels or Rousseau, there are definitions of **SOCIALISM**. To understand a political or social theory, however, it is not enough to know its intellectual history. One must also learn how the theory manifested itself in the lives of men throughout time and around the world. In his latest book, the author of *The Politics of Human Nature* and *The Morality of Everyday Life* does both with clear and lively prose undergirded by unparalleled expertise.

Can you . . .

Trace socialist thought from Plato to Gunnar and Alva Myrdal?

Explain to what extent the United States is a socialist country?

Identify Eugene Debs, Norman Thomas, The New Harmony Colony, Brook Farm, the Fabian Society, and the Frankfurt School?

Tell the (sometimes bloody) history of socialism in Mexico, Germany, England, Sweden, and Yugoslavia?

Also included:

Are the Masons socialist?

Why socialism and the Church are inevitably at odds.

Socialism's effect on the family.

Why an environmentalist is like a tomato.

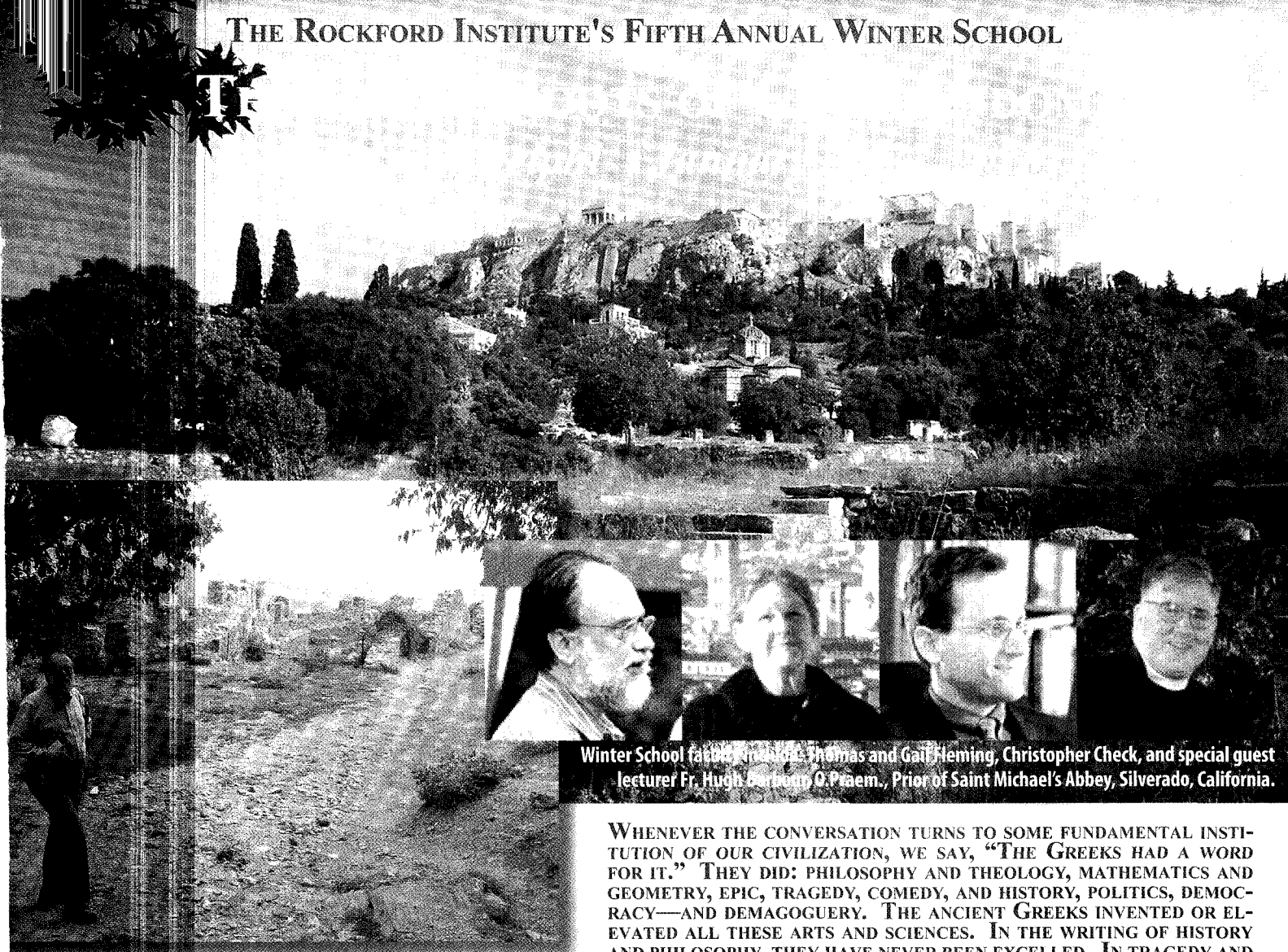
Hardcover • 144 pages
\$32.95 (includes s/h)

Buy an extra copy for your high-school or college-age son or daughter—and another for his or her teacher!

To order, send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103. (Make checks payable to The Rockford Institute.)

Call (800) 383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover.

THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE'S FIFTH ANNUAL WINTER SCHOOL



Winter School faculty include Thomas and Gail Fleming, Christopher Check, and special guest lecturer Fr. Hugh Darboon, O.Praem., Prior of Saint Michael's Abbey, Silverado, California.

The price for the Winter School includes:

- seven nights' (arrive Jan. 20; checkout on Jan. 27) lodging at the Acropolis Select Hotel (www.acropoliselect.gr), a fully renovated, three-star hotel within walking distance of the Acropolis;
- daily breakfast; five group meals (either dinner or lunch);
- all lectures, discussions, and walking tours;
- selected entrance fees to museums;
- and a motor-coach excursion to Delphi.

WHENEVER THE CONVERSATION TURNS TO SOME FUNDAMENTAL INSTITUTION OF OUR CIVILIZATION, WE SAY, "THE GREEKS HAD A WORD FOR IT." THEY DID: PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY, MATHEMATICS AND GEOMETRY, EPIC, TRAGEDY, COMEDY, AND HISTORY, POLITICS, DEMOCRACY—AND DEMAGOGUERY. THE ANCIENT GREEKS INVENTED OR EL-EVATED ALL THESE ARTS AND SCIENCES. IN THE WRITING OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY, THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN EXCELLED. IN TRAGEDY AND EPIC THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN EQUALED.

EVEN CHRISTIANITY OWES A PROFOUND DEBT TO THE GREEKS. CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IS GREEK PHILOSOPHY APPLIED TO REVELATION IN DEFENSE OF THE TRUTH AGAINST THE ATTACKS OF HERETICS. THE ARGUMENTS OF AUGUSTINE AND AMBROSE, ATHANASIOS AND BASIL, THOMAS AND BONAVENTURE, ARE INCONCEIVABLE WITHOUT THE WORKS OF PLATO, ARISTOTLE, AND PLOTINUS.

JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE THE GREEK MIND AND ITS GREATEST INVENTIONS: RESPONSIBLE SELF-GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL THEORY, TRAGEDY AND COMEDY, THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.

EARLY-BIRD RATES

SINGLE	\$1,495.00 EA	☐
COUPLE	\$2,295.00 EA	☐
SHARED DOUBLE	\$1,195.00 EA	☐

All prices increase \$200.00 after Sept. 15, 2009. Registration is limited. Previous Convivia have sold out. Registration fees are based on current exchange rates; the Institute reserves the right to assess a fee, should rates change significantly at the dollar's expense. The Institute will make every effort to help find roommates for students who wish to take advantage of the shared-double rate. If no roommate is available, the difference between the shared-double rate and the single-occupancy rate will be assessed.

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE/FAX _____

E-MAIL _____

☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ AMEX ☐ DISCOVER ☐ CHECK ENCL.

CARD NO. _____ EXP. _____

☐ PLEASE ADD MY ADDRESS TO THE INSTITUTE'S E-MAIL LIST

To register, clip and mail this form along with a check or credit-card information to

THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE/WINTER SCHOOL 2010
928 NORTH MAIN STREET
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61103

Full-time undergraduate and graduate students interested in scholarships, anyone interested in supporting the Institute's Scholarship Fund, and anyone desiring more information should contact: Christopher Check, executive vice president, at (815) 964-5811 or visit www.rockfordinstitute.org/events.

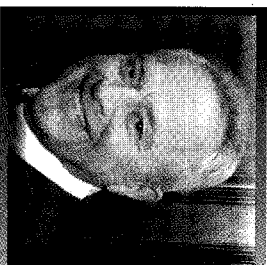
The 20th Annual Meeting of the John Randolph Club

"The Future of America: Hell or Texas?" November 13-14, 2009 • San Antonio

The John Randolph Club is going back to San Antonio to celebrate our 20th anniversary. Where better to argue for liberty than in Texas, where men and women have always fiercely defended their property, their families, and independence?

The Historic Saint Anthony Hotel
300 East Travis • San Antonio, TX 78205

A limited number of rooms are available at the Saint Anthony at the special rate of \$139.00 single or double occupancy, breakfast included. Reservations must be made no later than Monday, October 12, 2009. Call (210) 227-4392 and mention The Rockford Institute to get the special rate.



OPENING
ADDRESS
by Taki
THEODORACOPULOS

SPECIAL PRE-JRC PROGRAM: "Texas Grit"

Join us Thursday afternoon, November 12, for an historic San Antonio walking tour followed by a private reception and dinner. A second sightseeing excursion to the San Antonio Missions on the morning of Friday, November 13, will include lunch. Both meals will be followed by lectures on the brave Rangers and the bad gunmen—Wes Hardin and Clay Allison—who gave Texas a name for courage: grit!

*****AUTO**SCH 3-DIGIT 940
0002437272198245
ROM UNZ 1525 8 45 77
555 BRYANT ST # 371
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1704

Registration

PRE-JRC PROGRAM: "TEXAS GRIT"

\$195.00

(THURSDAY AFTERNOON SIGHTSEEING, RECEPTION AND DINNER,
FRIDAY MOTOR-COACH EXCURSION TO THE SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS AND LUNCHEON)

JOHN RANDOLPH CLUB FULL REGISTRATION

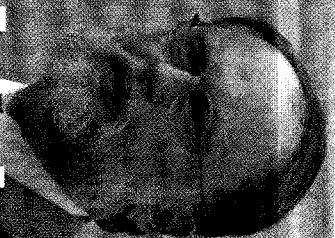
(JRC MEMBER) **\$250.00**
(NON-MEMBER) **\$275.00**

(FRIDAY EVENING RECEPTION AND OPENING ADDRESS,
SATURDAY PANELS, SATURDAY EVENING BANQUET AND PROGRAM)

ALL REGISTRATION PRICES INCREASE \$50.00 AFTER SEPTEMBER 15, 2009.

For student rates, panels -only rates, or other information, or to contribute to the Institute's scholarship fund so that worthy young students can attend this important event, contact Christopher Cheek at (815) 964-5811.

To register, call (800) 383-0680. For more information, visit www.RockfordInstitute.org.



THOMAS FLEMING



DAVID H.



JOHN LUKACS



ROGER M.



BILL MURCHISON



JAMES

